

# Canada's Government Rallies Behind Washington's War on Syria

By [Keith Jones](#)

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Canada's Conservative government has repeatedly voiced support for a US-led war on Syria. It has endorsed Washington's lies about having incontrovertible proof that the Assad regime mounted a chemical weapons attack last month and it has pledged Canada's support for the US waging war on Syria in defiance of international law.

Speaking to reporters August 28, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird said "consequences" for the Syrian regime should not be blocked or impeded by the lack of United Nations' Security Council authorization. Canada was "of one mind" with the US, Britain, and France and "will," Baird vowed, "continue to work with them in lock-step."

The next day, Prime Minister Stephen Harper declared himself a "reluctant convert" to "Western military action regarding the Syrian situation." As Harper went on to explain, his reluctance was not due to any qualms about the US unilaterally attacking countries and carrying out "regime change." Rather it arose from concerns about the potential danger to imperialist interests if the Syrian state were to fracture along ethnic-religious lines. "We have been, and remain, concerned," said Harper, that "this conflict ... is overwhelmingly sectarian in nature and does not have at present any ideal or obvious outcomes."

That said, Harper emphasized his support for the US raining missiles and bombs on a poor, former colonial country. "We do support," declared Canada's prime minister, "our allies who are contemplating forceful action."

Under conditions where there is massive popular opposition within the US and around the world to the impending US attack on Syria, Canada's support for Washington's war drive takes on added importance.

Last Friday, the day after the British parliament rejected a Conservative-Liberal coalition government motion authorizing Britain to join the US in attacking Syria, Baird rushed to second US Secretary of State John Kerry's concocted "case" against Syria. Endorsing Washington's attempts to bamboozle the public and run roughshod over the UN inspection process—in a reprise of the campaign of lies mounted by the administration of George W. Bush prior to the US's illegal 2003 invasion of Iraq—Baird said, "The Obama administration has shown great resolve and proper due diligence in the past week, and we fully support its efforts going forward."

In their remarks of last week, Harper and Baird indicated that the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) will not participate in the campaign of devastating air strikes the Obama administration has publicly vowed to inflict on Syria. In announcing his government's

support for US military action, Harper said, “at the present time, we have no plans of our own to have a Canadian military mission.” Baird, in a television interview the previous day, had implied Canada would, in any event, have little to contribute to the US attack, since it would likely begin with “cruise missiles or armed drones, neither of which Canada has.”

What Harper and Baird would not, nor could not, admit is that there is widespread public opposition to Canada participating in another imperialist war.

No one should presume, however, that this opposition and Harper’s statement mean that Canada’s role in the US war on Syria will be limited to political-diplomatic support.

Obama, Kerry and other US government spokesman have spoken of a “limited” campaign of air strikes. But they have also pledged to significantly “downgrade” Syria’s military capabilities and “upgrade” those of the Islamacist-dominated anti-Assad “rebels.” The US Congressional motion drafted at the White House’s behest would authorize military action for up to ninety days.

In other words, Washington is pursuing its oft-stated goal of toppling the Assad regime, but now through direct US military intervention. This escalation threatens to unleash a wider regional war, including potentially involving Iran—Syria’s principal ally and the target of a relentless US-led destabilization campaign, including punishing economic sanctions—and even Russia.

As the war on Syria expands, Washington can be expected to press Canada to deploy CAF ships and planes to the war theater and large sections of the Canadian ruling class will demand such a deployment so as to uphold the partnership with US imperialism through which it has asserted its own predatory interests on the world stage for the past seven decades.

The Harper government—which boasts about the depth of its support for Israel—has, it must be noted, repeatedly signaled that Canada would participate in any attack on Iran.

Moreover, the CAF has long been involved in planning for possible military intervention against Syria. Peter MacKay, who was Canada’s Defence Minister until a cabinet shuffle this past July, repeatedly let it be known that the CAF, in conjunction with Canada’s allies, was drafting plans to intervene in Syria.

Last week, General Tom Lawson, Canada’s Chief of the Defence Staff, was in Amman, Jordan for a three-day meeting with the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Martin Dempsey, as well as generals from eight other countries: the US’s most important NATO allies—Britain, France, Germany and Italy—and four countries that have been supporting and arming the US-backed Syrian rebels—Turkey (also a NATO member), Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan.

Canada’s Department of Defence has claimed that the meeting was long-scheduled and had nothing to do with the US preparations for imminent military action against Syria. Dempsey’s participation in the meeting alone makes this claim implausible, to say the least.

As part of its preparations for possible direct military intervention in Syria, Canada has also developed extensive military ties with Jordan, long one of the US’s most dependable client states in the Middle East, including signing a “defence co-operation memorandum” in the spring of 2012.

Canada's Liberal Party, until recently the Canadian elite's preferred party of government, is strongly supporting the US plans to attack Syria. Speaking last week, Liberal Foreign Affairs critic Marc Garneau said the Conservative government was right to pledge support for US military action against Syria even if taken without UN sanction.

Earlier, former Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin, former Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, and former Cabinet Minister and UN Ambassador Allan Rock had all asserted the right of Western countries to invade states and overthrow governments in the name of averting humanitarian disasters. All three boasted about the role Canada has played in developing a new political cover for imperialist intervention by promoting the so-called "responsibility to protect"—the ruse used by the US, France, Britain, and Canada to provide a rationale for the 2011 NATO attack on Libya, an attack that continued until Gaddafi was overthrown .

The Official Opposition New Democratic Party has, for its part, lent its full support to the US-orchestrated campaign to justify an attack on Syria in the name of policing the ban on the use of chemical weapons. Its only proviso has been that the UN inspectors should be allowed to file their report before any attack is launched. Canada's social-democrats have repeatedly facilitated Canada's participation in imperialist wars, including supporting NATO's 1999 war on Yugoslavia, the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and the 2011 NATO war on Libya.

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