

Canada's Media and Political Establishment Endorse Illegal Assassination of Iranian General Suleimani

By [Roger Jordan](#)

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In the two weeks since Washington violated Iraq's sovereignty to assassinate Iranian Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) General Qassem Suleimani, major Canadian corporate media outlets and leading figures within the political establishment have voiced their support for such acts of state terrorism. To the extent that any criticisms have been made, they have revolved around the question of whether Suleimani's killing was a tactical error that could undermine US imperialism's position in the Middle East.

Providing implicit support for the US drone strike, Canada's Foreign Ministry responded just hours after the illegal January 3 killing by issuing a statement denouncing Iranian "aggression" and calling for "de-escalation."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau avoided media appearances for several days thereafter, then remarked that he would have preferred that Canada had been informed in advance of the strike, given the large number of Canadian troops working alongside the US military in Iraq.

When on January 8 a reporter again solicited his government's view of the assassination, which was illegal under both US and international law, Trudeau went even further in extending his government's support. "Canada has long been aware of the threat posed by the IRGC on regional and global safety and security," said Trudeau. "The Americans made a decision based on their threat assessment. It was a threat assessment the US was tasked with making and made."

The Trudeau Liberal government has also welcomed Tuesday's move by the major European imperialist powers—Germany, France, and Britain—to file a complaint charging Iranian noncompliance with the 2015 nuclear accord. This step puts the European powers on a 60-day fast track to joining the US in imposing and policing crippling economic sanctions on Iran, although Tehran, as verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and all the other signatories to the accord, fully adhered to its terms until Washington withdrew with the avowed intention of destroying it.

"Canada strongly supports the diplomatic engagement of France, Germany and the United Kingdom in pressing Iran to respect its commitments under the agreement, including through activating the Dispute Resolution Mechanism," declared Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne in a statement.

Major media outlets have chimed in with full-throated endorsements of Trump's targeted killing. In an op-ed piece bluntly titled "Donald Trump is right on Iran," *Globe and Mail*

columnist Konrad Yakabuski wrote of Suleimani, “At some point, he had to be stopped. The real question is why it hadn’t happened sooner.”

Turning to the justification Trump gave for the drone strike, Yakabuski all but argued that Washington should have a blank cheque to eliminate any military or political figure that gets in the way of its interests. “Even setting aside the threat of an imminent attack on U.S. targets being planned by Gen. Suleimani evoked by the Trump administration to justify the timing of last week’s strike,” he wrote, “there is no doubt that Iran’s top military strategist had plenty of American blood on his hands... He stoked a civil war in Yemen, propped up Bashar al-Assad’s butchering regime in Syria, funded and armed a Shia militia in Iraq and Hezbollah in Lebanon, ... Eventually, someone in Washington had to stop Gen. Suleimani and put the theocrats in charge in Tehran on notice. It should have been done years ago.”

The breathtaking cynicism of such comments, reflected above all in their deliberate silence on the horrendous crimes of US imperialism and its allies in the Middle East over the past quarter century, can only be understood if one appreciates Canada’s deep involvement in Washington’s drive to establish unbridled domination over the world’s most important oil-exporting region.

Yakabuski portrays Suleimani as the evil genius responsible for pulling the strings behind the scenes in every major crisis in the Middle East over the past two decades to cover up the reality that American imperialism, with able assistance from its Canadian ally, bears responsibility for millions of deaths and the destruction of entire societies, from Afghanistan to Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen.

Yakabuski also stated his approval of Trump’s provocative May 2018 unilateral abrogation of the Iran nuclear accord. Parroting the lies of Trump and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and willfully ignoring Washington’s war threats against Iran and arming of its regional allies like the Saudis and Israel to the teeth, Yakabuski claimed, “Instead of encouraging Iran to abandon its terrorist activities across the Middle East, the sectarian regime in Tehran used the windfall it pocketed from the removal of sanctions to sow even greater chaos.”

The *Globe*, long considered the mouthpiece of the most powerful sections of Canada’s Bay Street financial elite, also published a comment endorsing the Suleimani assassination by Hugh Segal. A former chief of staff to Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and an influential figure within policymaking circles, Segal denounced Suleimani as the “most powerful and malevolent supreme commander of Iran’s terrorist and proxy forces.” He then proceeded to urge the Canadian government to step up preparations for war with Iran by organizing a NATO ministerial meeting to declare that the military alliance would interpret any Iranian attack on US military personnel as a violation of NATO’s Article 5, which requires all 28 member states to support military operations by a member if it comes under attack.

“[A] broader ministerial meeting to underline the reality of Article 5 would be broadly constructive,” stated Segal. “After all, it would be a serious path to restraint to make it perfectly clear that NATO would view a clear attack on the United States, its people, forces or homeland—be it kinetic, cyber or via terrorist proxy—as an act of aggression against all NATO members.”

Segal’s comments make clear that the Canadian ruling class is preparing to join the United

States in a military assault on Iran should Washington's campaign of "maximum pressure" on Tehran provoke all-out war. Such a conflict would rapidly engulf the entire Mideast and risks drawing in the other great powers.

The Trudeau government is already in the midst of a massive rearmament program, buying new fleets of warships and warplanes and implementing plans to hike military spending by more than 70 percent by 2026.

The Canadian ruling elite's collective silence on the illegality of the Trump administration's assassination of a foreign leader in a third country—an act that was manifestly both an act of war and a war crime—underscores that in pursuit of its global predatory imperialist ambitions, it will not allow legal niceties, let alone moral qualms, get in the way.

Despite Canada's carefully choreographed image as a "peacekeeping nation" committed to international law and diplomacy, the ruling elite's disdain for legal principles when it comes to enforcing its aggressive foreign policy interests is nothing new. In 2003, when the United States, in open defiance of the UN and international law, invaded Iraq on bogus claims of "weapons of mass destruction," Prime Minister Jean Chretien brushed aside questions about the legality of Washington's actions by declaring that such matters would be a matter for future historians to debate. While Chretien did not deploy Canadian troops to join the invasion, Canada played a supporting role behind the scenes, and bore an increased share of the military burden in Afghanistan to facilitate the deployment of more American troops to Iraq.

The cautious criticism issued from some quarters of the US assassination of Suleimani has nothing to do with opposition to war or concern about the legal and political implications of the most powerful imperialist country in the world adopting state terrorism as official government policy. Rather, these misgivings reflect, much like the comments made by leading Democrats in the US, the fears of a section of the ruling elite that Trump acted too hastily and does not have a broader strategy for the consolidation of US hegemony over the energy-rich and geostrategically critical Middle East.

The right-wing *National Post* summed this up in an editorial entitled "Suleimani deserved what he got, but we'll see what comes next." "The question at the heart of the attack on Iran's Gen. Qassem Suleimani isn't one of legality or justification," asserted the *Post*. "The world is unquestionably better off without him. Whether it is safer is the key question. We've been in this situation before, and the outcome doesn't bode well: In 2003 the administration of George W. Bush set out to make the world 'safer' by overthrowing Saddam Hussein."

The *Post*'s standpoint is clear. Trump's lack of foresight and recklessness risks further destabilizing a region that is central to the geopolitical and economic interests of American and Canadian imperialism. What they want is a more considered, comprehensive diplomatic, economic and military strategy to push back Iranian influence and strengthen US imperialist control over the Middle East vis-a-vis its main strategic rivals, Russia and China.

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