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## Canada's Military Spending



Image by Richard R. Schünemann.

As Donald Trump threatens to take over Canada he demands Ottawa increase military spending. The apparent contradiction is never mentioned in the mainstream media. Why? Because the seemingly contradictory position says a lot about Canadian “defence” forces ties to the US empire.

Over the past month the president elect has repeatedly described Canada as the “51 state”. Trump has also called Prime Minister Justin Trudeau “governor”, said his friend Wayne Gretzky should lead Canada and injected himself into Trudeau and finance minister Chrystia Freeland’s resignations. Yesterday Trump went further. He shared a map in which Canada is part of the US hours after stating that the US-Canada border was an “artificially drawn line” that he hoped to change through “economic force”. What started with Trump threatening to impose 25% tariffs if Canada failed to stop Fentanyl and undocumented migrants from entering the US, seems to be turning into a scheme to enforce something akin to a medieval siege of a city state.

(Trump's "51 state" mantra contrasts with Jean Chrétien's more sophisticated imperialism. In his memoir the former PM recounts telling President Bill Clinton: "Keeping some distance will be good for both of us. If we look as though we're the fifty-first state of the United States, there's nothing we can do for you internationally, just as the governor of a state can't do anything for you internationally. But if we look independent enough, we can do things for you that even the CIA cannot do.") Alongside the menacing rhetoric, Trump is demanding Canada spend more on an institution purportedly devoted to "defending" the country from foreign threats. The 'you better build up your military while I threaten to annex your country' rhetoric highlights a peculiar dynamic in US-Canada relations. How many other bordering nations demand their neighbours beef up their militaries?

The reason Trump is pushing for increased Canadian military spending is that it benefits the US empire. The Canadian Forces assist the US military through naval missions, special forces deployments, arms testing as well as by joining US-led wars. Additionally, General Dynamics Canada, Lockheed Martin Canada and other US branch plants dominate Canada's arms industry and thus benefit from greater spending.

Canada's "defence" community, which constantly hypes China, Russian, jihadist and other threats, has mostly ignored Trump's threats. In fact, even as Trump and X owner Elon Musk intervene overtly in Canadian politics while saying they want the US to annex Canada, the Globe and Mail editorial board and the Toronto Sun's Brian Lilley publish commentaries about the threat posed by Chinese interference. Incredibly, the official editorial in today's Globe is headlined "Open door to foreign interference", which ignores the US to focus on China.

Canada's "defence" establishment largely ignore US threats because it is not oriented towards protecting Canada from aggression. Canada's military, weapons companies and "defence" intellectuals/think-tanks are aligned with the US empire's quest for global domination.

According to DND, there are "80 treaty-level agreements, more than 250 memoranda of understanding, and 145 bilateral forums on defence" between the two countries' militaries. In 2015 CBC reported on sustained, high-level, Canadian and US military discussions to create a so-called Canada-US Integrated Forces. Not shared with Canadian political leaders, the plan was to set up integrated air, sea, land and special forces to operate under a unified command when deployed internationally.

The depth of the Canada-U.S. military alliance is such that if US Forces attacked this country it would be extremely difficult for the Canadian Forces to defend our soil. In fact, given the entanglements, the Canadian Forces would likely enable a US invasion: As happened during

the 2003 invasion of Iraq — which Ottawa officially opposed — some Canadian troops on exchange in the US might march north. As is the norm when whenever the US invades another country, Canadian officers would likely operate NORAD systems aiding the aggression just like the wars in Vietnam, Iraq and elsewhere. Weaponry produced in Canada would certainly be used by US soldiers marching north.

The Canadian “defence” sector has tied its ship to our southern neighbour’s massive military industrial complex. But the truth, unpalatable as it may be to some, is that the USA is the only nation that could realistically invade Canada.

Until World War II US military planners had detailed plans to invade. Ostensibly for a war with Britain, Canada War Plan Red included abolishing the Canadian government and holding territory “in perpetuity”. A 1928 draft of the plan added, “it should be made quite clear to Canada that in a war she would suffer grievously.” The invasion plans, which were approved by the secretary of war and secretary of navy, remained current until WWII.

In *Cautious Beginnings: Canadian Foreign Intelligence 1939 – 1951* Kurt Jensen notes, “the primary preoccupation of military intelligence and planning was response to an attack by the United States.” The 1921 Canadian Defence Scheme One was an elaborate plan to defend against US invasion.

But today?

At the same press conference in which he suggested employing “economic force” to rewrite an “artificially drawn line” with Canada, Trump said the US might use military force to take the Panama Canal and Greenland.

Perhaps the president-elect didn’t mention doing the same to accomplish his Canadian dream because he knows the truth about the Great White North’s military. It is already effectively a part of the USA’s war-industrial complex.

It’s time politicians start demanding Canada decisively break away from the US empire and the place to start is severing the military ties.

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Yves Engler’s latest book is *Stand on Guard for Whom?: A People’s History of the Canadian Military*.