

# Canada's top general discussed fully integrating its armed forces with US military

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Discussions have taken place at the highest levels of the Canadian and United States militaries about the possibility of fully integrating the two forces.

The talks were part of broader consultations aimed at considering ways in which the two militaries, which have been close partners for decades, could increase cooperation, according to a document obtained by CBC. The Canada-US Integrated Forces Program saw the then head of Canada's military, Chief of Defence Staff General Tom Lawson, and the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey meet on numerous occasions in 2013.

The development of these discussions was reported in an October 2013 memo or briefing note written by the Canadian military's Strategic Joint Staff. The very next month the US and Canadian militaries agreed to more closely integrate their operations and deployments in the Asia-Pacific region. This agreement, made as part of Washington's anti-China "Pivot to Asia," has never been made public. However, it is part of Canadian plans to vastly expand military engagement in the region through joint Canada-US exercises and the establishment of Canadian Armed Forces' forward bases in Singapore and South Korea.

According to the briefing note, which was obtained by CBC under a Freedom of Information request, Lawson and Dempsey considered three options at their meetings. The first was to improve interoperability between the Canadian and US armed forces. The two generals also discussed plans for a permanent Canada-US foreign intervention force which would be used for offensive deployments to "hot spots" around the globe. The "standing integrated force," reports the CBC, was to have formally established structures for command, control and logistics.

The proposal was modelled on the existing integrated Canadian-US air defences under the North American

Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). But unlike NORAD, the purpose of the new joint force would be explicitly offensive.

The CBC article summarized the thinking behind the briefing note, writing, "It contemplates how the (Canadian) military could remain globally engaged as [the] Afghan training mission was coming to a close."

This revealing admission underscores the aggressive intentions guiding the discussions. The Canadian military played a leading role in the neocolonial occupation of Afghanistan, including by taking control of counter-insurgency operations in Kandahar for six years from 2005.

An anonymous Canadian military source made clear that the plans for the Canada-US intervention force call for it to have land, air and naval capabilities and include air, naval, army, and Special Operations forces drawn from both countries.

The command structure, as one would expect given the dichotomy in the size of the US and Canadian militaries, is to be headquartered outside Canada.

The third, and most comprehensive, option was complete integration of the Canadian and US militaries under one unified command structure. Lawson, according to the document obtained by the CBC, ultimately indicated that Canada was not ready for full integration of the two countries militaries "at this time."

Canada's Conservative government has responded to the CBC's revelations by claiming that it knew nothing of the Lawson-Dempsey discussions. If true, this would be a staggering development. It would mean that Canada's military had, at the highest levels, flouted civilian government control so as to conduct its own discussions and planning about the military's core functions and structures—including effectively when Canada goes to war.

However, there is good reason to believe that the

government is lying. Lying to dupe the public about the extent to which Canada is already integrated into US imperialism's strategic offensives around the world and Ottawa's plans to expand that integration still further.

Given the broad public opposition to Canada's participation in US-led wars around the world, the Conservatives would have every reason to want to avoid being implicated in plans to integrate the two countries' militaries in the run-up to the October 19 federal election.

The two most ambitious proposals—to fully integrate the two militaries or create a bi-national permanent fighting force—have reportedly been shelved, at least for the time being. But enhanced cooperation is proceeding apace. This is proven by the signing of the secret agreement between the Canadian and US militaries on armed forces' operations in the Asia-Pacific directed against China. Canadian troops have also recently been sent to a US-led training mission in Ukraine, where soldiers from both countries are working alongside one another to train Kiev's military and national guard for its war against pro-Russian separatists in the east.

Canada's ruling elite fully supports the deepening of military cooperation with the United States, the most aggressive and destabilizing force in global politics. For the past quarter century, Washington has been waging virtually uninterrupted war. It has laid waste to entire societies, including Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and Libya. It has fomented civil war in Syria, and is menacing its geopolitical rivals, above all nuclear-armed Russia and China, raising the danger of a conflict that could rapidly spiral into a global conflagration.

Successive governments in Ottawa have tasked Canada's military with playing a leading role in one US-led war and regime-change operation after another, from the 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia, to the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, the US-orchestrated coup in Haiti in 2004, the NATO regime change war in Libya in 2011, and the ongoing war in Syria and Iraq.

Stephen Harper's Conservative government has been among the most strident supporters of the far-right regime in Kiev, which was brought to power by a US-backed coup spearheaded by fascist forces in February 2014. Ottawa has contributed air, sea and land forces to the aggressive moves that the US-led NATO has taken to encircle Russia in the Baltic region and Eastern Europe.

The October 2013 Strategic Joint Staff briefing note urged that Canada step up involvement with the NATO Response Force (NRF), which has since been developed into a rapid response force capable of deploying to

Eastern Europe within days to oppose Russia. The military strategists also suggested integrating Canadian troops into the British-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), a force of up to 10,000 designed to respond to crisis situations.

In the Arctic, consideration is being given to expanding collaboration with the US on missile defence. Another Department of National Defence briefing from September 2013, obtained by the *Ottawa Citizen*, pointed to the department's support for establishing a new radar system on Canadian territory as part of the Pentagon's missile shield.

In the Middle East, a fleet of the 9 Canadian warplanes, including CF-18 fighter jets, is involved in the bombardment of targets in Syria and Iraq, working on a daily basis with the US military. Ottawa is also a staunch backer of Washington's Gulf allies, above all Saudi Arabia. Last year the Saudi regime signed a deal with the Conservative government worth more than \$14 billion for armored personnel carriers—the largest foreign arms deal in Canadian history.

Under conditions where Canadian imperialism is facing a serious decline in its world position due to the emergence of new powers and has become ever more dependent on overseas investments, Canadian big business views its military-strategic partnership with Washington as vital to asserting its interests on the global stage.

The entire political establishment is fully committed to this course. In the wake of this week's CBC revelations about the discussions between the Canadian and US military top brass on tying Canada still more closely to the Pentagon war machine, none of the parties contesting the October 19 election raised so much as a single word of concern



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