

Canada's Prime Minister considered US military attack scenario amid trade war, Trump annexation threats

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Prime Minister Mark Carney acknowledged last week that his government has examined the possibility of military action by the United States against Canada. Carney made this extraordinary admission September 23 during an hour-long interview with the *New York Times* at their New York offices.

According to the *Times*, “When pressed on whether he took Mr. Trump’s threats to make Canada a 51st state seriously, Mr. Carney suggested that he had carefully examined the possibility of U.S.-led military action, but declined to discuss in detail what that involved.”

“I think you have a responsibility in these roles to look at extreme tail risk,” Carney said. “That’s just risk management. That’s not a base case, but it would be irresponsible not to” prepare.

Carney chose his words carefully. He stressed that an American attack was not his government’s expected scenario. But the fact that a Canadian prime minister considers it necessary to prepare for the possibility that the United States—Canada’s closest military ally for over eight decades and overwhelmingly its most important economic partner—could resort to force speaks to the historic breakdown of relations between North America’s two imperialist powers

This was also true of Carney’s interview remark calling into question the era of US dollar dominance, and suggesting an enhanced global role for the Euro. Canada remains dependent on the US for about three-quarters of its exports, yet the decline of Washington’s world economic position is so great and the state of Canada-US relations so fraught that even its northern neighbour is no longer ready to unequivocally accept the primacy of the greenback.

The breakdown in Canada-US relations is one element in a rapidly escalating third world war driven by the efforts of the major powers to seize hold of markets, raw materials, trade routes, and cheap labour from their rivals. The normal channels of interstate relations built up after the Second World War have collapsed, as expressed most graphically in US President Donald Trump’s blood-curdling threats of violence against enemies and nominal “allies” alike. But Canadian and European imperialism are no less involved, as shown by their reckless escalation of the war on Russia.

The seriousness of the rupture between Ottawa and Washington

was underscored in August, when trade negotiations between the two countries collapsed and Carney publicly resorted to the language of war. After suspending the talks in response to new US demands, he told reporters, “You’re at war when you’re attacked, and we got attacked.”

Carney accused Washington of having “miscalculated” Canada’s resolve, announced “dollar for dollar” retaliation against US tariffs and declared that Ottawa would not accept demands that compromised Canadian sovereignty or its ability to conclude trade agreements with other countries.

He also declared that Canada had been forced to recognize that “America had changed” and that “sometimes, its signature is written in pencil.” Trump responded by once again invoking his annexationist threats, declaring that Canada wanted the “benefits of being a State, without being one.”

At the time, Carney’s assertion that Canada was “at war” was waved away by the mainstream press as a rhetorical escalation in an increasingly bitter trade dispute. His subsequent admission that his government is examining the possibility of US military action reveals that the crisis in Canada-US relations has developed far beyond the public’s awareness.

Carney’s comments also give added significance to the *Globe and Mail*’s January revelation that the Canadian Armed Forces has modelled a hypothetical US invasion. Citing senior government officials, the *Globe* reported that planners assumed US forces could overwhelm Canada’s principal conventional military positions within two days to a week.

The conceptual exercise reportedly examined a transition to guerrilla-style resistance involving small military units and potentially armed civilians using drones, sabotage, ambushes and hit-and-run tactics. Officials also reportedly calculated that Canada might have at most three months’ warning, with the collapse of the NORAD joint US-Canada aerospace and maritime defence command serving as a major indication that an attack was becoming possible.

The *Globe*’s report stressed that this was a conceptual model rather than an actionable operational war plan. Nevertheless, Carney’s remarks confirm that the possibility of military conflict with the United States has been considered at the highest levels of the Canadian state.

The immediate context is Trump’s repeated threats to transform

Canada into the “51st state.” These threats cannot be separated from his administration’s broader assertion of US dominance throughout the Western Hemisphere.

In its National Security Strategy released late last year, the Trump administration formally revived a modified Monroe Doctrine, which it calls the “Trump Corollary,” or the “Donroe Doctrine.” Washington has declared its intention to assert unchallenged American predominance throughout the hemisphere and prevent rival powers—foremost China, but also Europe—from gaining control over strategic territory, resources, production chains and infrastructure.

These declarations have been backed by military violence. In January, US forces attacked Venezuela and captured President Nicolás Maduro. Washington subsequently asserted sweeping authority over Venezuelan oil revenues and presented the operation as part of the reassertion of US power throughout the hemisphere.

The pressure has extended to Cuba, where Trump has intensified economic strangulation, openly predicted the government’s collapse and threatened further action. US military officials are preparing possible military operations against the island.

In the Arctic, Trump spent much of the past two years demanding US control over Greenland and repeatedly refused to rule out military force. Even now, following the announcement of an agreement with Denmark, the threat of military force remains as the US will build two new bases and has obtained an enhanced “right” to block non-NATO members from operating in the region.

As the WWSWS has explained, Washington’s drive to establish unchallenged predominance throughout the hemisphere is aimed at consolidating its “near abroad” in preparation for direct confrontations with its principal rivals, above all China.

Canadian imperialism has increasingly found itself on the receiving end of this policy.

The trade relationship between the two countries has deteriorated sharply. Washington has effectively repudiated the US-Mexico-Canada trade agreement, imposed successive tariff measures and demanded concessions over Canadian energy, critical minerals and trade relations with third countries. Carney has accused the Trump administration of seeking to make Canada economically subordinate to the United States.

Yet the *New York Times* interview also underscored the limits of Ottawa’s response. The Canadian and US economies have been deeply integrated for decades, and the United States remains by far Canada’s most important export market. Carney acknowledged that a functioning economic relationship with Washington remains essential and said he continues to believe a “mutually beneficial trade deal,” including what he has termed “Fortress North America” provisions in key areas, is possible.

This contradiction lies at the centre of his government’s strategy. Canadian imperialism is seeking to reduce its vulnerabilities to US pressure and expand its economic and military-security relations with Washington’s European rivals, while preserving the economic and military relationship on which it has depended for generations as Washington’s junior partner.

Carney has made “strategic autonomy” a central theme of his

government. In the *Times* interview, he pointed to efforts to reduce reliance on Elon Musk’s Starlink satellite network and to reconsider Canada’s dependence on US-built F-35 fighter aircraft. His government is also massively hiking military spending—with a pledge to spend 5 percent of GDP or more than \$150 billion per year on defence and defence-related infrastructure by 2035—and expanding domestic military production, satellite communications, northern infrastructure and alternative supply chains.

Based on agreement that the war on nuclear-armed Russia must be waged to victory, Canada and Europe have focused, since Carney came to power in the spring of 2025, on expanding their military-strategic and economic partnerships. Carney has promoted deeper Canada-EU integration in defence production, critical minerals, energy, artificial intelligence, space technology, finance and digital trade.

Carney’s aggressive foreign policy necessarily goes hand in hand with an intensification of the onslaught on the working class at home. Earlier this month, Carney rolled out the red carpet for the international financial oligarchy at an investment summit, where he announced the impending privatization of Canada’s four major airports. His government has also announced what it calls a “mega” corporate tax cut and tabled a new omnibus bill that guts regulatory oversight of big business projects and normalizes the arbitrary illegalization of strikes by the labour minister under Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code.

The decisive political issue for the working class across North America is the rejection of both Trump’s “America First” nationalism and Carney’s “Team Canada” response. Retaliatory tariffs, accelerated military spending and appeals for national unity subordinate workers in Canada to the strategic interests of Canadian big business, just as Trump’s trade war and militarism subordinate American workers to the interests of the US ruling class.

Carney’s admission that he is looking at plans for open war with the US is a stark warning of the dead end of nationalism and destructive logic of trade war.

The only progressive alternative is a socialist internationalist one: opposition to the trade war, and rejection of appeals to rally behind either Ottawa or Washington, or any of the regional factions of the Canadian ruling class seeking to advance their own ambitions against Ottawa. What is above all needed is political unity between workers on both sides of the border against the policies pursued by the Carney and Trump governments to lay the basis for the mass mobilization of the working class in struggle for the United Socialist States of North America.



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