

Towards a North American Homeland: U.S.-Canada “Cross-Border” Surveillance, Intelligence Sharing, Law Enforcement and Data Collection

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Some of the corporate interests that are steering the U.S.-Canada Beyond the Border integration agenda are not quite satisfied with its progress so far and they would like the implementation process to be accelerated. The bilateral initiative which was launched almost two years ago promotes a shared vision for perimeter security. It seeks to improve information sharing between security agencies.

Under the agreement, both countries are moving towards a coordinated entry/exit system and are developing a harmonized cargo security strategy. In addition, the U.S. and Canada are strengthening integrated cross-border intelligence sharing and law enforcement operations. Canada’s own electronic eavesdropping agency is also working hand and hand with the NSA. They are both increasing data collection and surveillance in the North American Homeland.

Minister of Transport Lisa Raitt gave a [speech](#) at the Association of Canadian Port Authorities annual conference in August. She stated that,

“Ensuring the security of our transportation systems is key to strengthening the Canada-U.S. trade relationship. To build prosperity through trade, businesses and governments on both sides of our shared border must have confidence that our transportation systems will work together to meet our mutual security needs. That is why Canada and the United States are working closely together to implement the [Beyond the Border Action Plan](#).”

While she didn’t reference the [Maritime Commerce Resilience Project](#) by name, Raitt acknowledged that the U.S. and Canada are, “developing a joint cross-border approach to help maritime commerce recover faster after a major disruption.” This would include a significant natural disaster or terrorist attack that impacts North America. She also mentioned a pilot program underway at the Port of Prince Rupert which is part of efforts to [harmonize the cargo screening process](#) between the U.S. and Canada. Both countries continue to advance this agenda through the [Integrated Cargo Security Strategy](#), a key component of the Beyond the Border deal.

The Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE) is an influential organization that lobbies the government on behalf of Canada’s largest corporations. Throughout the years, they have tirelessly pushed for deeper continental integration. In a [letter sent to Prime Minister Stephen Harper](#), John Manley, President and CEO of the CCCE lays out what some of the

Conservative Party's priorities should be in the next session of parliament. As far as the North American partnership goes, the CCCE called on Canada, the U.S. and Mexico to further strengthen and renew their trilateral relationship. This includes forging a North American energy advantage through projects such as the Keystone XL pipeline which it noted was, "An essential step is the development of a comprehensive strategy to expand and enhance cross-border energy infrastructure." The CCCE's letter to Prime Minister Harper also stressed that, "The Canada-U.S. Beyond the Border and Regulatory Cooperation initiatives that you helped launch two years ago hold much promise, although so far tangible benefits have been few and far between." In other words, big business who have to most to gain from these agreements want to speed up the whole process of North American integration.

At the end of June, the Department of Homeland Security and the Canada Border Services Agency began [Phase II of the Entry/Exit System](#), a commitment of the Beyond the Border action plan. The project builds on [Phase I](#) which involved collecting and exchanging biographic information at four selected land border crossings. Phase II has been expanded to include the exchange of biographic entry data collected from third-country nationals and permanent residents of Canada and the U. S. at all common ports of entry. In 2014, they will also start sharing biometric information at the border. Both countries are moving closer to fully implementing a biometric entry and exit data system. They are laying the groundwork for the creation of a North American biometric ID card. The U.S. and Canada are further merging databases and are expanding surveillance and intelligence gathering activities.

On July 12, Montana Democratic Senator Jon Tester chaired the hearing, [Protecting our Northern Border: Enhancing Collaboration and Building Local Partnerships](#). The meeting emphasized how, "Securing such an expansive border requires a multi-faceted approach. In addition to a smart and effective deployment of technology and manpower, we must also be doing everything we can to ensure federal, local, state and Canadian partners are working very closely and collaboratively." It also described other, "opportunities for collaboration and cost-sharing, including stronger partnerships between agencies, local officials, tribes and the private sector." Before the hearings took place, Senator Tester talked to the CBC about the prospect of [deploying a high-tech cable sensor](#) along the U.S.-Canada border. This would include the installation of the [Blue Rose in-ground perimeter defense security system](#). The low-level surveillance radar is based on fibre optic technology which is used, "to detect sound and vibration transmitted by intruders such as people walking or running and moving vehicles near the sensor." The increased militarization of the northern border is forcing Canada to further comply with U.S.-style security measures.

A controversial U.S.-Canada cross-border law enforcement initiative which is essentially a land based version of the [Shiprider program](#) has been delayed due to legal ramifications. Under the Beyond the Border perimeter security plan, the Next Generation pilot project which would create integrated teams in areas such as intelligence and criminal investigations was scheduled to be launched in the summer of 2012. According to an [RCMP memo](#), the U.S. is demanding that its agents taking part in the bilateral undertaking be exempt from Canadian law. This has raised serious concerns about transparency, accountability and responsibility. It is yet another attempt by the U.S. to chip away at Canadian sovereignty. An article by [Michael Harris warned](#) that, "Once you give the U.S a platform to carry weapons and perform investigative duties inside our country, how far will they push the next envelope?" The pilot project is part of the process of further acclimating U.S. policing activities in Canada. As part of a North American security perimeter, both countries continue to expand the nature and scope of joint law enforcement operations,

along with intelligence collection and sharing.

An example on how North America is being increasingly viewed a single entity occurred several months back during a Senate Judiciary Committee meeting. California Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein displayed a map that was designed by the National Security Agency (NSA) which showed domestic and global terror activity that it has allegedly helped disrupt. When it came to North America, the diagram [identified Canada and Mexico as part of the U.S. Homeland](#). While the move garnered a lot of speculation, [RT pointed out](#), “Whatever the reason for the NSA’s creation of the Homeland, the spy agency has already been condemned for failing to respect the sovereignty of other nations through its extensive data-collection efforts.” The NSA is also working in close partnership with [Communications Security Establishment Canada](#) (CSEC). An article from [Global Research explained](#) that, “the two organizations have integrated personnel—i.e. swap personnel to improve seamless collaboration. They also share Internet surveillance programs.” It went on to say that the NSA, “shares information on Canadians’ communications with Canada’s national security apparatus in exchange for information that CSEC gathers on Americans.”

The never ending war on terrorism is being used to justify the huge police state security apparatus being assembled. This includes the militarization of the northern border and the creation of a North American security perimeter. In the name of national security, there has been a steady erosion of civil liberties and privacy rights in both the U.S. and Canada. Our freedoms are under assault. The amount of information being collected and shared on all aspects of our daily lives has expanded and is being stored in massive databases. Sweeping new surveillance powers targeting terrorists and other criminals are being increasingly turned against those who are critical of government policy. There is a concerted effort to demonize political opponents, activists, protesters and other peaceful groups. We are witnessing the criminalization of dissent where those who oppose the government’s agenda are being labelled as terrorists and a threat to security.

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