

US Says Trudeau Adopts “America First” Foreign Policy, Media Ignores It

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Global Research, July 21, 2019

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Region: [Canada](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

Wouldn't you think the corporate media would be interested in the US embassy's reaction to the appointment of a new Canadian foreign minister? Especially if that reaction was to claim Ottawa had decided to adopt an "America First" foreign policy? Wouldn't some big newspaper or TV station, dedicated to telling the truth about what our governments, corporations and other institutions are doing, find it noteworthy enough to report the existence of an embassy memo claiming Justin Trudeau appointed Chrystia Freeland foreign minister in order to promote the interests of President Donald Trump?

Surprise, surprise, no!

The reason? The best this long-time observer of Canadian foreign policy can come up with? Embarrassment.

At the start of the month Communist Party researcher Jay Watts disclosed a dispatch from the US embassy in Ottawa to the State Department in Washington entitled "[Canada Adopts 'America First' Foreign Policy.](#)" Uncovered through a freedom of information request, the largely redacted cable also notes that Justin Trudeau's government would be "Prioritizing U.S. Relations, ASAP."

The March 2017 cable was authored just weeks after Freeland was appointed foreign affairs minister. US officials concluded that Trudeau promoted Freeland "in large part because of her strong U.S. contacts" and that her "number one priority" was working closely with Washington.

The Grayzone's Ben Norton wrote an [article](#) based on the cable. Appropriately, the New York based journalist linked the memo to Canadian policy on Venezuela, Syria, Russia, Nicaragua, Iran and elsewhere. A number of left-wing websites reposted Norton's article and RT International invited me on to discuss the memo, but there was no other mention of the dispatch .

While the blackout was media wide, most striking was the lack of reaction by one of the most left-wing commentators afforded space in a corporate daily. In December *Toronto Star* columnist Heather Mallick described Freeland as "[likely winner](#) of Canadian of the Year, should that prize exist." In a number of previous columns she called Freeland "[Canada's famously](#) feminist Foreign Minister", a "[brilliant and wonderful](#) Liberal candidate" and lauded "[a stark](#), extraordinary speech [Freeland delivered] in Washington on Wednesday after receiving a diplomat of the year award at the Foreign Policy forum."

While she praises Freeland, Mallick is [hostile](#) to Donald Trump. I emailed Mallick to ask if she'd seen the cable, whether she planned to write about it and if she considered it ironic that US officials thought her "Canadian of the Year" was pursuing an 'America First' policy. She didn't respond to two emails, but on Tuesday she [praised Freeland](#) again.

Clearly the media establishment understands that covering the memo would embarrass Freeland and the broader foreign policy establishment. Most Canadians don't want Ottawa following US policy, particularly with a widely disliked individual as president.

For Freeland and the foreign policy power structure there are few ways to discuss a relatively straightforward memo that would not embarrass them and reveal the lie at the heart of the 'Canada is a force for good' mythology that is this country's foreign policy self-image. So the best tactic is to take no notice.

But that's not the case with many other international issues in which Ottawa is pursuing aggressive, inhumane, policy. In the case of Venezuela, for instance, the media can detail important elements of Canada's campaign to oust the government since they've spent years demonizing it. In fact, Canada's naked imperialism in Venezuela is often portrayed as benevolence!

While the dearth of coverage of the 'America first' Canadian foreign policy memo is outrageous, it isn't surprising. In [A Propaganda System: How Canada's Government, Corporations, Media and Academia Sell War and Exploitation](#) I detail extreme media bias in favor of power on topics ranging from Palestine to East Timor, investment agreements to the mining industry. The suppression of critical information regarding Canada's role in Haiti over the past decade and a half is particularly stark. Below are three examples:

- On Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, 2003, Jean Chrétien's Liberal government organized an international gathering to consider overthrowing Haiti's government. At the "Ottawa Initiative on Haiti" Canadian, French and US officials discussed ousting elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, putting Haiti under UN trusteeship and re-creating the disbanded Haitian army. A year later the US, France and Canada invaded Haiti to overthrow Aristide's government. Still, the dominant media all but ignored the "Ottawa Initiative on Haiti", even though information about it is easily accessible online and solidarity activists across the country referenced it repeatedly. A Canadian Newsstand search found not one single English-language report about the meeting (except for mentions of it by me and two other Haiti solidarity activists in opinion pieces).
- The media [largely refused](#) to print or broadcast a 2011 Canadian Press story demonstrating that Ottawa militarized its response to the horrible 2010 earthquake to control Haiti's traumatized and suffering population. According to an internal file the Canadian Press uncovered through an access to information request, [Canadian officials worried](#) that "political fragility has increased the risks of a popular uprising, and has fed the rumour that ex-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, currently in exile in South Africa, wants to organize a return to power." The government documents also explain the importance of strengthening the Haitian authorities' ability "to contain the risks of a popular uprising." While [2,000 Canadian troops were deployed](#) (alongside 10,000 US soldiers), a half-dozen Heavy Urban Search and Rescue Teams in cities across the country were readied but never sent.
- On February 15, 2019, the Haiti Information Project [photographed](#) heavily-[armed](#)

Canadian troops patrolling the Port-au-Prince airport in the midst of a general strike calling for the president to resign. I wrote a story about the deployment, wondering what they were doing in the country (The Haiti Information Project suggested they may have helped family members of President Jovenel Moïse's unpopular government flee the country.) I was in contact with reporters at the *Ottawa Citizen* and *National Post* about the photos, but no media reported the Canadian special forces presence in Haiti.

The dominant media's coverage of Canadian foreign policy is heavily biased in favor of power. It highlights the importance of following, sharing, contributing to and funding left and independent media.

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