



ALLEGED MISCOMMUNICATION ABOUT FIVE EYES SHOULD PROMPT A CONVERSATION ABOUT ONE COUNTRY'S MEMBERSHIP

by
Caroline O'Neill

In February, [The Financial Times reported](#) that senior White House official Peter Navarro called for Canada to be removed from the Five Eyes intelligence network. Navarro has denied the allegations, [telling The Financial Times](#), “We would never ever jeopardise our national security ... with allies like Canada.” His use of the word allies, especially in reference to Canada, is curious given the administration he works for has repeatedly used rhetoric suggesting Canada should become America’s 51st state. U.S. President Donald Trump made the call through his brand of social media diplomacy, using his platform Truth Social to refer to Canada’s then-prime minister as [the future governor of the state of Canada](#).

Reports suggest the Canadian government views this to be more than just presidential bluster. Justin Trudeau was caught on a hot microphone moment by Canada’s public broadcaster, the CBC, saying he believes President Trump’s threat to annex Canada [is “a real thing.”](#) In January a reporter asked President Trump if he planned to absorb Canada through military action. Trump responded saying, [“no — economic force.”](#) Thus President Trump has made his plans clear: he intends to financially starve Canada so as to acquire the nation as a new state.

As mentioned, Navarro denies he made the suggestion. However, this should be prompting another question: Why is the United States still a welcome member of the Five Eyes?

White House Closes the Door

Canada and the United States are two members of the Five Eyes intelligence network. The remaining members are the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. According to [Public Safety Canada](#),

“The Five Eyes agreement stands out from other arrangements because the parties are diverse societies, governed by rule of law and robust human rights and are bonded by a common language. These characteristics aid partners in sharing information with one another to protect their shared national interests.” As the second Trump administration establishes its priorities, it is worth exploring whether or not the parties involved continue to share common interests.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with President Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance in the Oval Office in February; the televised meeting was meant to solidify relations between the countries through a minerals agreement. Instead, the meeting ended after an [intense verbal exchange](#). Then, the White House [paused all military aid to Ukraine](#), halting the shipment of ammunition and vehicles. It also stopped sharing intelligence. This would suggest a clear deviation from a national interest that had been shared by all Five Eyes members since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. In a press conference [Canada’s former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the United States](#) is, “talking about working positively with Russia, appeasing Vladimir Putin, a lying, murderous dictator. Make that make sense.”

The United Kingdom has indicated it will [continue to share intelligence](#) with Ukraine, but will not share any obtained through the U.S. Not only does this point to a fracture regarding shared national interests, the move has wreaked havoc on the intelligence-sharing supply chain. While the decision to halt military action has dominated headlines, a former UK defence secretary called the American decision to suspend intelligence [“suffocating.”](#)

Gabbard Sparks Concerns

Former Democratic presidential candidate Tulsi Gabbard was sworn in as the United States’ national intelligence director in February. Her nomination to the position was among the most controversial of President Trump’s picks. Gabbard received enough votes to earn the confirmation, with 52 senators voting in her favor and 48 voting against her. Despite



having served as a Democratic congresswoman, all Democrats opposed her confirmation. They were joined by Republican Senator Mitch McConnell. McConnell issued a statement, saying he was voting against her based on concerns about [pro-Russia stances](#) and [past support for Edward Snowden](#). “The nation should not have to worry that the intelligence assessments the President receives are tainted by a Director of National Intelligence with a history of alarming lapses in judgment,” [McConnell said in a statement](#). He went on to say that entrusting America’s national security to Gabbard is an “unnecessary risk.”

Gabbard’s nomination and subsequent confirmation prompted some raised eyebrows across the border. Former director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) [Ward Elcock told Canada’s public broadcaster](#) he was concerned by Gabbard’s lack of experience. Elcock expressed worry about the quality of intelligence Canada might receive.

Standing up for a Commonwealth member?
The majority of the Five Eyes are also part of the Commonwealth; the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are all members. The [Commonwealth Charter](#) is a document that lays out a set of values uniting all Commonwealth countries. Specifically, the Charter states, the Commonwealth is needed in an era wrought by uncertainty as a compelling force for good. The Charter enumerates 16 core values. International peace and security are ranked third. It reads in part that, “We will be guided by our commitment to the security, development and prosperity of every member state.” Given the repeated threats a Commonwealth member is facing to its own

sovereignty from the United States, the Five Eyes might be posing more risk to Canada than value, at least in its current form.

King Charles III recently opened Canada’s 45th parliamentary session by reading the throne speech—the third time a sovereign has done so in Canada. “The True North is indeed strong and free,” [the king said](#). Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom might consider a public display of support by halting intelligence to a nation threatening a fellow member.

Intelligence liability?

A recent snafu with the messaging app Signal suggests there may be more concerns as well. U.S. National Intelligence Adviser Michael Waltz accidentally added [The Atlantic’s Jeffrey Goldberg to a group chat](#) about an attack on Yemen, an incident that forced Gabbard and CIA Director John Ratcliffe in front of the Senate Intelligence Committee. Waltz was removed from that role. But security concerns continue to plague the administration. Media reports suggest Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth used an unsecured internet line so he could access Signal in the Pentagon.

The other members of the Five Eyes will have to determine whether or not the current American administration is a liability, rather than a necessary partner.

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