

North American Union: Laying the Foundation for a North American Security Perimeter

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The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently unveiled a northern border strategy which seeks to address security concerns, while at the same time facilitating the flow of lawful travel and trade. The new plan promotes enhanced shared intelligence and joint law enforcement integration with Canada. It further builds on initiatives included in the Beyond the Border agreement and is part of ongoing efforts to lay the foundation for a North American security perimeter.

On June 5, DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano announced the [Northern Border Strategy](#) (NBS) aimed at deterring and preventing terrorism, smuggling, trafficking and illegal immigration. In a [press release](#) she explained how the new plan, “provides a unifying framework for the Department’s work focused on enhancing the security and resiliency along our northern border while expediting legitimate travel and trade with Canada.” In order to accomplish these objectives, the NBS seeks to, “improve information sharing and analysis within DHS, as well as with key partners. The Department will also enhance coordination of U.S.-Canada joint interdictions and investigations, deploy technologies to aid joint security efforts along the border, and continue to update infrastructure.” The NBS parallels the [National Northern Border Counternarcotics Strategy](#) issued in January. It also supports goals outlined in the U.S.-Canada [Beyond the Border](#) action plan which focuses on addressing security threats early, facilitating trade, economic growth and jobs, integrating cross-border law enforcement, as well as improving infrastructure and cyber-security.

Another facet of the perimeter security deal is the U.S.-Canada [Regulatory Cooperation Council](#) (RCC) action plan. It seeks greater regulatory alignment in the areas of agriculture and food, transportation, the environment, health, along with consumer products. In January, government representatives, as well as industry officials held [regulatory meetings](#) in Washington. The RCC has now published [work plans](#) in some of the specific areas noting that the rest of them will be posted when they are finalized. The whole process of regulatory reform has received more attention with President Barack Obama signing an Executive Order in early May, [Promoting International Regulatory Cooperation](#). This will build on the work already underway by the RCC. In Canada, there are fears that deepening regulatory integration with the U.S. could weaken and erode any independent regulatory capacity, thus threatening its sovereignty. Further harmonization could result in Canada losing control over its ability to regulate food safety. This could also lead to a race to the bottom with respect to other regulatory standards.

As part of the Beyond the Border agreement, the U.S. and Canada are also working towards

an integrated cargo security strategy. In May, they agreed to a new [mutual recognition initiative](#) whereby, "cargo shipped on passenger aircraft will now be screened only once for transportation security reasons, at the point of origin and will not need to be rescreened prior to upload on an aircraft in the other country." Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy James Nealon proclaimed that, "Through this program, we will be able to move goods between U.S. and Canada faster, more efficiently, and most securely." A [Transport Canada backgrounder](#) acknowledged that, "Air cargo is just the start. Canada and the U.S. are working together to strengthen co-ordination, co-operation and timely decision-making at the border for cargo shipped by sea or land with a view to increasing two-way trade, and reducing travel and commercial disruptions. When the Action Plan is fully implemented, the principle of 'screened once, accepted twice' is intended to apply to all modes of shipping cargo." In order to keep trade flowing across the northern border, Canada is being pressured to further take on U.S. security priorities.

Last month, there were a series of U.S.-Canada joint consultation sessions with stakeholders regarding [facilitating cross-border business](#). In addition, Public Safety Canada and the DHS issued the document, [Considerations for United States-Canada Border Traffic Disruption Management](#). According to a [news release](#) it, "fulfils one of the first commitments under the Canada-U.S. Action Plan on Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness." The joint emergency guide, "outlines best practices and identifies critical issues to consider when developing or updating traffic management plans to ensure they are tailored to address regional requirements and individual border crossings." Minister of Public Safety Vic Toews stated that, "This plan is the result of close collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including government officials from the local, state, and provincial/territorial level, to manage the flow of traffic near the border during a disruption." He went on to say, "Implementation of this guide will help maintain economic stability and ensure that priority traffic moves freely towards and away from the secure Canada-U.S. border during times of crisis."

Through various initiatives, NAFTA partners are laying the foundation for a fully integrated North American security perimeter. In the advent of a terrorist attack, disaster or any other perceived threat to the continent, the U.S. could then execute control over the security perimeter. The global elite are not ones to let a serious crisis go to waste. Such a scenario would also provide the perfect cover needed to officially usher in a North American Union.

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