

Canada strongly opposes U.S. deployment of troops near border



Ottawa, March 27 (RHC)-- The Canadian government has confirmed rumors that Washington is considering troop deployments along the U.S.-Canada border for coronavirus enforcement, calling the proposal “unnecessary” and “damaging” to neighborly relations.

The White House is looking at sending about 1,000 troops to the border, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) reported on Thursday, citing an anonymous source familiar with the proposal. When asked about it, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his government has “been in discussions” with the Trump administration, thereby confirming the plan’s existence.

“Canada and the U.S. have the longest unmilitarized border in the world. It is very much in both of our interests for it to remain that way,” Trudeau told reporters.

The Canadian government says it's "strongly opposed" to the idea of sending American troops to the border to intercept illegal migrants as part of that country's response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland was more blunt, saying that Canada was “strongly opposed” to the proposal and made that “very, very clear” to the Americans. While the U.S. has every right to do what it wants within its own borders, Freeland said, it was Canada’s view that “this is an entirely unnecessary step which we would view as damaging to our relationship.”

According to the CBC report, the proposal involves placing some 1,000 U.S. troops about 15 miles (25 km) away from the border itself, and watching for possible illegal crossings using drones and remote sensors.

Given that the U.S.-Canada border is 5,525 miles (8,891km) long, such a small number of troops involved would obviously not be able to cover all of it. The border has already been closed to “nonessential” traffic since March 18, under a mutual agreement between Trudeau and U.S. President Donald Trump.

Some 5,000 U.S. Army troops and 2,000 National Guard personnel had been deployed to the much shorter border with Mexico – 1,954 miles – last year, and were due to stay through September 2020 as part of Operation Faithful Patriot. It is unclear whether their deployment has been affected in any way by the COVID-19 outbreak.

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