

Canada's Perspective: Considering Geographical Expansion of NORAD

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Since its inception during the Cold War, North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) has been at the core of continental defence of the United States of America and Canada. Today's security environment sees growing Chinese ambitious presence and renewed Russian hybrid threats in the Arctic, with repeated incidents of surveillance technologies in buoys and unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP), and also anti-aircraft missiles, submarines, and long-range bombers.

As tensions rise, these offensive Arctic incursions require reinforcement and increased defence measures, and several American think tanks and individual thinkers have appealed to strengthen NORAD's capabilities through inviting Greenland and Mexico into the strategic command.

Currently a binational alliance, the formal integration of Greenland and Mexico into NORAD would extend crucial early-warning redlines and aggregate intelligence and resource sharing, possibly improving geographical security in the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions on the northeastern continental approach. However, there are implications to expansion, primarily the prospect of Canada losing its equal partnership within the bilateral alliance, losing confidence and trust in what may become an US-dominant agreement. Furthermore, NORAD would see augmented diplomatic frustration with a reprioritization of goals and commitments through the introduction of new shared visions and new individual state concerns. It also introduces high transactional costs for multilateral integration, at a time when NORAD is already focused on domestic modernization efforts, including comprehensive capabilities, development of technology, and improvement of infrastructure.

Rather than formal integration into the command, NORAD should seek to enhance existing multinational efforts, integrating all parties in the planning and execution of training exercises with intention to standardize interoperability through integration of all-domain capabilities and coordination of information sharing.