

Sleeping with the enemy

Grits ripped over military ties with China

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OTTAWA — Members of the federal opposition Conservatives are demanding the Carney Liberal government immediately halt bilateral defense coordination talks with China, arguing Ottawa is compromising national security without parliamentary oversight.

Bilateral defence coordination between Canada and China quietly resumed Sept. 4 after military coordination officially ended in 2018, shortly after Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou was arrested by Canadian authorities in Vancouver on a U.S. extradition warrant, followed shortly thereafter by the abduction and imprisonment of Canadians Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor by Chinese officials.

That represents a worrying change in Canadian foreign policy with Beijing's communist regime, said an open letter to Prime Minister Mark Carney issued Wednesday by Conservative defence critic James Bezan and foreign affairs critic Eric Duncan,

“Like millions of Canadians, we agreed with your clear-headed statement last year that China was ‘the biggest security threat’ to our country,” read an excerpt from the letter. “This made it all the more disappointing when you changed your position after the election, pursuing instead a ‘strategic partnership’ with Beijing for a ‘New World Order.’ ”

The Tories say they're concerned that reopening a military dialogue with China took place without either the Canadian public or Parliament being made aware, noting that Canadians first learned of the resumption via Chinese state-controlled media.

“We will not stand up for our sovereignty or our values by working with a government that has kidnapped our people, interfered with our elections, dropped surveillance buoys in our Arctic waters, and set up secret police stations on Canadian soil,” the letter read. “We must not forget that China has repeatedly threatened the sovereignty of its neighbours, even challenging Canadian aircraft and vessels in the region.”

Despite historically frosty relations between Canada and China, Beijing has tried hard to inject its messaging deep into Canada's corridors of power.

Last week, the Toronto Sun reported that China's embassy in Ottawa spent an untold number of dollars paying niche Parliament Hill newspaper The Hill Times to publish dozens of op-eds since 2022.