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Canada's Potential Role in Escalating U.S.-Iran Conflict: Experts Weigh In

As tensions rise in the Middle East following a deadly drone strike against U.S. troops in Jordan, experts suggest that Canada may find itself involved in supporting the United States' retaliatory actions against Iranian proxies operating in Syria and Iraq. The recent attack, which claimed the lives of three U.S. soldiers, has prompted concerns about Canada's potential role in the unfolding conflict.

Canada's Condemnation and Commitment

The Canadian government has condemned the attack by Iran-backed groups against U.S. forces in Jordan. However, when questioned about Canada's involvement in the growing conflict, the government declined to speculate on future military operations. Department of National Defence spokesperson Andrée-Anne Poulin stated that Canada remains committed to supporting its partners in the fight against terrorism in the region but refrained from outlining specific actions.

Expectations from Analysts

While the government remains cautious in its statements, experts offer insights into the possible roles Canada could play in this evolving situation.

Ali Ghanbarpour-Dizboni, Chair of the Military and Strategic Studies Program at the Royal Military College of Canada, emphasizes the importance of Canada



honoring its obligations to the United States, its primary security and commercial partner. While he doesn't believe Canada will be directly involved in combat, he suggests that the Canadian Forces may provide logistical or general assistance, such as in airstrikes or drone strikes.

Walter Dorn, a Professor of Defence Studies, anticipates a minor role for Canada, similar to its involvement in defending commercial ships in the Red Sea, a critical trade route. He emphasizes that Canada is likely to endorse U.S. actions against Iranian-backed groups based on intelligence received but cautions about the accuracy of such intelligence, citing past instances of incorrect information.

James Hornastle, an Assistant Professor in International Relations, expects Canada to have an indirect role in the conflict, particularly in supporting cyber efforts against Iran through its membership in

intelligence-sharing alliances like the Five Eyes.

The Broader Concern: Iran's Ambitions

Aurel Braun, a Professor of International Relations, highlights the global concern surrounding Iran's actions. He views Iran as a central address for multiple conflicts and identifies the regime as having dangerous ambitions, including acquiring nuclear weapons. He asserts that addressing Iran's actions is not solely an American concern but a global one.

Differing Opinions on Canada's Involvement

However, not all experts agree on Canada's role in the conflict. Peter Denton, an Associate Professor at the Royal Military College of Canada, believes Canada should avoid military involvement and instead signal support for moderates in Iran who seek peace and prosperity. He argues against further military actions that could exacerbate the situation.

As the situation in the Middle East unfolds, Canada faces decisions regarding its role in addressing the challenges posed by Iranian proxies and the broader concerns associated with the region. The government's stance and actions will be closely watched as it navigates these complex international dynamics.

Five Key Factors to Watch in the Canadian Business Landscape in 2024

The Canadian business landscape in 2023 witnessed significant developments, with housing and inflation concerns taking center stage, while the job market showed unexpected resilience. As we step into 2024, several critical factors are set to influence the Canadian business environment, including inflation, interest rates, market conditions, housing, energy, and the rise of artificial intelligence.

1. Inflation and Interest Rates

Despite a decline from its 2022 highs, inflation in Canada has yet to reach the Bank of Canada's target of 2%. The central bank's key interest rate has remained unchanged at 5% since July. Economists anticipate a further slowdown in inflation, but the Bank of Canada remains prepared to raise rates if needed. Experts suggest that higher interest rates may come into play in 2024, potentially leading to a shift towards interest rate cuts as the economy softens.

2. Market Dynamics

The S&P/TSX composite index is expected to close 2023 with gains, largely driven by optimism around potential rate cuts in 2024. While 2023 saw market volatility, the year is anticipated to end on a positive note. However, the next six months may bring a slowdown as interest rates weigh on market performance before a potential pickup in the latter half of the year. Sectors like consumer discretionary, materials, and industrials are being closely watched for signs of resilience, with technology also expected to benefit from easing rates.

3. Housing Market

The Canadian housing market



experienced a cooling trend in 2023, partly due to higher mortgage rates. However, strong demand persisted as the population continued to grow. Policymakers at various levels of government face mounting pressure to address housing affordability issues. Experts expect governments to focus on increasing housing supply and reducing barriers to new construction. Lower interest rates in the latter part of the year are predicted to offer some relief in affordability, although the national average home price is expected to see only modest gains.

4. Energy Sector

The expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline, originally slated for crude oil shipments in 2023, faced potential delays due to regulatory setbacks. This project

is expected to increase Canadian oil production, with the final regulations due in 2025. The oil and gas industry is expected to combat climate change by reducing emissions significantly or purchase offset credits.

5. Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The emergence of AI, exemplified by technologies like ChatGPT, gained prominence in 2023, offering a glimpse of its potential applications in various domains. Businesses and individuals are in the early stages of adopting and understanding AI. While some organizations embrace AI, others approach it with caution due to uncertainties and potential risks.

Ensuring safeguards against misuse is a key concern for cybersecurity officials. AI's rapid rollout is expected to bring significant changes to various industries and job roles.



Ukrainian General Requests Canada's Decommissioned Rockets to Support Defense Against Russia

In a recent exclusive interview with Global News, Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov, a Ukrainian military leader, has appealed to Canada to provide Ukraine with tens of thousands of decommissioned rockets currently stored at a military base in Saskatchewan. The rockets in question are CRV7 ground attack rockets, and Lt. Gen. Budanov has requested their transfer to Ukraine to bolster its defense capabilities against Russian forces while saving Canadian taxpayers the cost of their disposal.

More than 83,000 CRV7 rockets are warehoused at the Canadian Forces Ammunition Depot Dundurn in Saskatchewan. While Canada no longer has a use for them and has hired a private



contractor to demolish them, Ukraine is in urgent need of munitions due to diminishing supplies. Lt. Gen. Budanov emphasized that the CRV7 rockets would be used in

Ukrainian attack helicopters and ground launchers to target Russian tanks and supplies. Lt. Gen. Budanov emphasized that the CRV7 rockets would be used in

Ukraine has been engaged in discussions

with Canada regarding this matter, but a decision is still pending. Canadian officials are looking into the request but have expressed concerns about the age and potential instability of the rockets. They caution that handling and transporting these decades-old rockets could pose risks.

Despite these concerns, Ukrainian authorities argue that they are accustomed to handling older munitions like the CRV7s and are willing to assume the risks. They believe that some of the Canadian rockets are in good condition and may still have warheads. Any non-functional rockets could be disassembled, and their parts repurposed for Ukraine's drone program.

The urgency of this request stems from Ukraine's ongoing efforts to replenish its military arsenal, particularly munitions, as it faces a prolonged conflict with Russian forces. The conflict has largely become an artillery battle, with both sides seeking to secure supplies of ammunition.

While Canadian veterans are collaborating with Ukraine on this initiative, political discussions have arisen in Canada. Opposition leader Pierre Poilievre and the Conservative Party have called for the rockets to be given to Ukraine to defend its sovereignty, instead of incurring the cost of their disposal. However, the Canadian government is pursuing testing to ensure the rockets' operational effectiveness and safety for transport to Ukraine before making a decision.

Ukrainian officials have expressed disappointment at the politicization of the issue and emphasize their urgent need for ammunition. Despite the challenges and uncertainties, they believe that the CRV7 rockets could significantly contribute to Ukraine's defense efforts.

Canada's CRV7 rockets, originally manufactured by Bristol Aerospace, were once the NATO standard. While Canada used them on aircraft like CF18s, Ukraine possesses ground launchers capable of firing these rockets for field artillery purposes. The rockets are considered valuable assets for Ukraine's defense.

Ukraine's request for these rockets is part of a broader effort to obtain military equipment from various countries, including Australia. While Australia has cited safety concerns for not providing certain equipment, advocates argue that Ukraine should be trusted to make the best use of available resources to protect its citizens in a time of crisis.

In conclusion, the request for Canada's decommissioned CRV7 rockets by Ukraine underscores the pressing need for munitions in the ongoing conflict with Russia, while sparking political debate and discussions about the potential risks and benefits of such a transfer.

Government of Canada's Interest Cap Risks Criminal Surge

TORONTO – The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP), the voice of police leadership in Ontario, and the Canadian Lenders Association (CLA) are raising concerns regarding legislation introduced by the federal government which could lead to a dangerous rise in criminal activity.

A new study by the OACP and the CLA indicates the government's recent decision to decrease the maximum allowable rate of interest may lead to a rise in illicit financial activities, endangering Canadians who are already at risk of not making ends meet.

"The legislation has the potential to create a vacuum for criminals to fill," said Barry Horrobin, Co-Chair of the OACP's Community Safety and Crime Prevention Committee. "Under the legislation, illegal predatory lenders could take advantage of Canadians by operating online from outside the bounds of Canadian jurisdiction. By forcing legal, responsible lenders out of the marketplace, we worry Canadians will be targeted by this type of criminal activity." The comprehensive study further highlights: The government's proposed interest rate reduction from 47% to 35% APR will restrict access to essential credit for approximately 4.7 million Canadians. These Canadians will be forced to payday or illegal lending to meet their credit needs, as was the case in three other markets that imposed rate caps. A range of consequences which will limit the ability of non-prime borrowers to meet essential financial requirements. Case studies, including Quebec, California, and the

UK demonstrate the various unintended, negative consequences of interest rate caps, underscoring the potentially disastrous repercussions this policy will have for the broader financial ecosystem, including illegal

for a balanced approach that protects Canadians' access to credit while safeguarding the integrity of the financial system.

Overall, this paper examines the impact of the proposed reduction in the maximum allowable interest rate from 47% to 35% APR for non-prime borrowers in Canada. Many Canadians, including newcomers, and individuals with limited lending history, will no longer qualify for loans at 35% APR. A significant number of regulated lenders will need to exit the market due to their inability to serve the higher-risk non-prime segment following the rate decrease, potentially leading to an increase in criminal activities, including illegal lending and loan sharking. Canadians should not be relegated solely to the realm of predatory payday lenders or noncompliant/illegal lenders when seeking financial assistance. Instead, they should have the opportunity to establish and bolster their credit histories over time with the assistance of responsible and regulated lenders. International

case studies from Quebec, California, and the UK reveal the outcomes of lowering interest rates are diverse and complex. Significantly, these examples show a constriction in legal lending markets, accompanied by a rise in illegal, high-interest loan products. This comparative analysis underscores the need for careful consideration of the broader financial ecosystem when implementing such policies. In 2019, the California Legislature passed the Fair Access to Credit Act, which capped interest rates at 36%, for personal loans between \$2,500 and \$10,000, but failed to address payday lenders who were able to still charge triple-digit interest on loans.



activity and organized crime. "The facts say this is a bad policy that is going to leave millions of Canadians without access to loans during an affordability crisis," said Gary Schwartz, president and CEO of the Canadian Lenders Association. "The report's finding that this change might contribute to an upsurge in criminal activities and disproportionately impact already at-risk Canadians is yet another clear demonstration the government has failed to think this through."

Ultimately, the paper's findings show a comprehensive review of the government's new interest rate law is needed to prevent potentially adverse outcomes for millions of Canadians. It also highlights the critical need



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NDP: Liberals and Conservatives team up to push Canadians out of electoral reform



OTTAWA—On Thursday, the Liberals and Conservatives teamed up to vote against a motion brought forward by NDP MP Lisa Marie Barron to give Canadians more of a say over Canada's electoral system. Barron's motion would have created a National Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, giving Canadians a chance to provide recommendations on how to move forward with electoral reform. "Canadians are facing really big problems right now; the detrimental impacts of the climate cri-

sis, a lack of affordable housing, and keeping food in the table are all top of mind for people—and with that, Canadians should see a government that reflects them and their values" said Barron. "But both the Liberals and Conservatives showed Canadians today that they don't want to move forward on better electoral representation." Justin Trudeau campaigned to make the 2015 election the last election under First Past the Post. However, Trudeau has continued to break his promise. With the cur-

rent electoral system, a party can don't care as long as they're getting a majority government with less than 39 per cent of the vote. "You should get to have a say over how you're represented in Parliament—and the Liberals refuse to act because their rich CEO friends

don't care as long as they're getting massive government hand-outs," added Barron. "And Pierre Poilievre and the corporate-controlled Conservatives are too busy working to make their rich donors happy. Neither is focused on what

Canadians want to see change." New Democrats, whether you're a tradesperson, a teacher, a senior—or whoever, you should be represented in Parliament. We're going to keep fighting to give you a say over Canada's elections."

Montreal Man Charged with Threatening to Kill Prime Minister Trudeau

A 30-year-old man from Montreal, Paul Clarissou, is set to appear in court after allegedly making threats to kill Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in a social media post. The RCMP has charged Clarissou with uttering threats against the Prime Minister, following an investigation by the Integrated National Security Enforcement Team. According to the RCMP, Clarissou's alleged statements on his social media account, formerly known as Twitter, were taken seriously, and the force emphasized a zero-tolerance policy to-

wards violent threats. The charge was laid on January 31, prompting Clarissou's upcom-

ing court appearance. While the Prime Minister's Office refrained from commenting on security matters involving the Prime Minister, the RCMP reiterated the gravity of such threats, emphasizing that perpetrators could face criminal charges carrying significant penalties. Clarissou's appearance in court on Wednesday marks the

next step in addressing the alleged threat against the Prime Minister.



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