Western Canada ‘Wexit’ Party Supports U.S. Access to Arctic Northwest Passage

ARLINGTON, Va. – A political movement to break Canada in two because of political and economic grievances between the eastern and western regions of the nation is addressing several domestic issues, but also supports the access of U.S. military ships to the Northwest Passage, which Canada claims as territorial waters.

In a Sept. 19 release, Wexit Canada, the voice for the separation of the Western Canadian Province – British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba – from the Government of Canada, protested some of Eastern Canada’s agricultural, industrial regulation, taxation and social policies.

“In addition, the Government of Canada continues to agitate our southern neighbor through weak law enforcement, compromised intelligence and border security, unsustainable unvetted immigration, susceptibility to espionage, and most importantly – geopolitical opposition to America’s legitimate claims to the Northwest Passage situated in the Arctic,” the release said. “Western Canadians do not share the same hostility, as Eastern Canadians do, towards our No. 1 military and economic partner. A confederation of Western Canadian Provinces would be a better partner to the United States of America than they currently enjoy in Ottawa.”

The United States does not recognize Canada’s claim to the Northwest Passage. In a May meeting of the Arctic Council, U.S. State Secretary Mike Pompeo termed the Canadian claim as “illegitimate,” according to a June 27 article in Quartz by Zoe Schlanger. The conflicting positions are a rarity in the

usually close U.S.-Canadian military and diplomatic relations.

Canada considers the Northwest Passage as internal waters because the passage is within the waters of the 20,000 islands of Canada's northern archipelago. The United States regards the passage as an international strait, with the freedom of navigation standard for such a strait.

Schlanger wrote that under a 1988 treaty, the United States worked out a compromise to the dispute: "the U.S. doesn't officially recognize the Northwest Passage as Canada's, but it agrees to ask for permission to pass through it. Canada, in turn, agrees in advance to always grant permission."

If the coverage of Arctic ice continues to lessen, the increased shipping in and exploration of Arctic waters may result in an increase in international tensions in the region.

U.S. Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer has focused increased attention of U.S. interests in the Arctic region and sponsored an exercise this month in the Aleutian Islands.