

US foreign policy**Donald Trump's US no longer a reliable ally, warns Belgium in leaked document**

Dynamics in Washington 'are likely to compromise vital interests' of Belgium and the EU, says foreign ministry document



Many European leaders have emphasised the continued importance of their alliance with the US, but behind closed doors officials are grappling with the tensions © John Thys/AFP/Getty Images

Laura Dubois in Brussels

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Belgium's foreign ministry has warned internally that the US under Donald Trump is no longer a reliable ally and urged officials to cultivate ties with his opponents to protect the country's interests, according to a document seen by the FT.

As alarm mounted in Europe about the US president's apparent hostility to traditional allies in the region, the ministry set out a strategy to "calibrate" engagement with Washington to protect Belgian interests while avoiding being seen as "hostile", the internal document shows.

"It is now clear that the American partner is no longer the ally it has been in the past," says the strategy document, produced by the ministry's Americas and Caribbean unit in late 2025.

It calls for a “thorough re-evaluation of the relation between the European Union and Belgium on the one hand, and the US on the other hand,” adding that “the dynamics currently at play in the United States . . . are likely to compromise several vital interests of Belgium and the European Union”.

During his second term, Trump has instigated a trade war with the EU, threatened to invade part of the bloc’s territory and supported far-right parties while warning of Europe’s “civilisational erasure”, causing a widening transatlantic rift.

Many European leaders have emphasised the continued importance of their alliance with Washington, given their dependence on the US for defence and trade, but behind closed doors officials are grappling with the tensions.

The Belgian document says that “an engagement with the current US administration remains indispensable”, and that dialogue with the levels below the federal government should be “significantly reinforced”, including with Republican and Democratic states and mayors of large cities.

It also recommends keeping up discussions with the Democratic opposition, engaging with Congress and “identifying the new generations of bipartisan elites that could play a role in tomorrow’s America”.

The document — dated October 27 2025, roughly eight months after Prime Minister Bart De Wever’s government took power — also notes: “We should not underestimate the respect that President Trump has for royal families.”

Since the document was drafted, Belgium’s King Philippe has flown to the US to attend the football World Cup in July, while Queen Mathilde has accompanied several Belgian ministers to New York for the UN General Assembly this week.



Donald Trump and King Philippe inside the Royal Palace in Brussels in May 2017 © Albert Nieboer/picture-alliance/dpa/AP

The document outlines a “strategy and operational implementation” on dealing with the US, outlining various risks of officials engaging with the Trump administration and proposing to focus on joint areas of interest such as drug trafficking.

“Our federal and regional ministers will need to calibrate . . . their presence and actions . . . taking into account the opportunities and risks inherent in these visits,” the foreign ministry said.

Foreign minister Maxime Prévot, defence minister Theo Francken, finance minister Jan Jambon and interior minister Bernard Quintin have all visited the US over the past year.

A foreign ministry spokesperson said the paper was an “internal working document” and its contents “should be distinguished from an agreed policy strategy”.

“Assessing what international developments mean for Belgium, including its relations with its allies, is part of the foreign ministry’s regular work. Changes in US policy naturally warrant such reflection,” they added. “The transatlantic relationship is changing, and we need to take that into account as we defend our interests and prepare for the future.”

Bill White, the US ambassador to Belgium, wrote on X on Thursday: “Belgian authorities have told us this document was prepared by working-level officials over a year ago and in no way reflects Belgium’s official position towards the United States.”

“The regrettable unauthorised release of this document does not change the trajectory of our sacred ties cemented through nearly two centuries of common sacrifice and mutual commitment to a safer, stronger, and more prosperous world,” White added.

The document outlines four key topics of engagement: economic relations, military spending, migration and the fight against drug trafficking and organised crime.

On economic relations and trade, it warns that “intensifying our engagements could increase our vulnerability to potential points of friction that might trigger new protectionist threats or restrictions”.

Therefore, “diversifying our partnerships is more essential than ever”, it concludes.

The foreign ministry noted that efforts to buy American weapons are viewed positively by the Trump administration, but the purchase of European military material should be increased.

The document suggested that the most promising area of co-operation is the fight against drug trafficking, organised crime and terrorism. Belgium is a large producer of synthetic drugs and a key entry point for cocaine traffic through its port of Antwerp, as well as being the target of large-scale terrorist attacks in 2016.

Exchanges with US agencies should be stepped up, the ministry wrote, but the US approach to fighting drug gangs “seems to be treated like a military operation rather than a judicial one — raising questions for European police co-operation”.

It said US cuts to foreign aid could be counter-productive and strengthen drug cartels as employers. “US policies regarding cyber surveillance and cryptocurrencies could hinder financial traceability and increase the risk of corruption,” it added.

The foreign ministry said the fight against terrorism had been “politicised” in the US and there was a “taboo surrounding the extreme right, a tolerance for hostile narratives [online] and disinformation, and attempts at foreign interference . . . all under the guise of freedom of speech”.

“There is a risk that shared information and extraditions could lead to death sentences in the US,” it added.

“It remains essential to identify points of intersection between Belgian and US interests to avoid a passive stance in the bilateral relationship,” the ministry wrote, adding that the aim was to keep Belgium “among the partners perceived by the United States as non-hostile”.

Additional reporting by Amy Mackinnon in Washington

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