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G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) and Foreign Threats to Democracy

Latest Developments

- The RRM Focal Points (representatives designated by G7 members) met last in Ottawa in November 2019, committing to further consolidate the mechanism and advance its mandate, including identifying and tracking foreign interference online.

- RRM Canada is currently working with US counterparts to co-host the next Focal Point meeting in Washington D.C. on April 20, 2020,

- RRM Canada has focused its cutting edge analytical capacity to identify and track foreign interference online especially as it pertains to undermining electoral integrity. We are looking to expand this capacity to understand better how malign actors exploit the online environment to undermine democracies beyond the electoral cycle, including by manipulating information related to events of global importance, such as the spread of the coronavirus.

Current Position

- As democracies, we face common threats and need to work together to overcome them.

- Latvia and Ukraine have valuable experience and insight when it comes to addressing foreign interference.

- RRM Canada produced reports pertaining to foreign interference online during the Ukrainian election against a background of larger Government of Canada efforts aimed at supporting Ukrainian democracy.

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Background

G7 Leaders announced the RRM at the Charlevoix Summit in June 2018 and Foreign Ministers endorsed its mandate and progress at Dinard in 2019. The mandate of the RRM is to strengthen G7 coordination to identify and respond to diverse and evolving threats to G7 democracies, including through sharing information and analysis, and identifying opportunities for coordinated response.
In recognition of Canadian leadership at the G7, Canada coordinates the RRM on an ongoing basis. To this end, the RRM Coordination Unit (Unit) was stood-up at Global Affairs Canada within the International Security and Political Affairs Branch. The Unit has two primary functions. First, it serves as a permanent secretariat to the RRM, coordinating and convening the RRM Focal Points. Second, the Unit supports the Canadian Focal Point and ensures whole-of-government engagement with the RRM. To clearly distinguish the two functions, activities in support of the Canadian Focal Point are designated as RRM Canada activities.

Coordination and Leadership of the RRM
To fulfill its secretariat functions, the Unit triages and shares information across the RRM and regularly convenes the Focal Points. The information shared across the RRM is used to develop a better understanding of the evolving threat environment and identify opportunities for coordinated response.

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The Unit works closely with G7 Presidencies to ensure continued engagement in the RRM. In this context, the Unit is currently working with US counterparts to co-host the next Focal Point meeting in Washington D.C. on April 20, 2020.

Collaboration with countries which are on the frontlines of foreign interference, _____ is critical as their experience and expertise helps strengthen the RRM's capacity to identify and counter foreign threats to democracies.

RRM Canada
Besides its secretariat functions, the Unit supports the Canadian Focal Point and maintains a Canada-based network of interlocutors to ensure whole-of-government engagement with the RRM. These responsibilities take place under the RRM Canada umbrella. RRM Canada produces reports on threat patterns and trends and leverages an open source data analytics capacity.

RRM Canada plays an essential role in leveraging structures across the Government of Canada by working closely with security and intelligence partners, as well as other relevant departments such as Democratic Institutions and Canadian Heritage. In the lead up to the Canadian federal election in October 2019, RRM Canada represented Global Affairs Canada at the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force.

Prior to its key engagement during Canadian elections, RRM Canada played an important role during 2019 Ukrainian presidential and EU parliamentary elections. Leveraging its open data monitoring and analytical capacity as well as insights from the RRM network, RRM Canada monitored these elections for foreign interference, specifically in social media conversations.

Going forward, RRM Canada will look to expanding its analytical capacity beyond monitoring elections and continue to develop new approaches to keep up with the evolving threat environment online.