

TOP SECRET///LIMITED/CANADIAN EYES ONLY  
2022 10 26

## BRIEFING TO THE PRIME MINISTER ON FOREIGN INTERFERENCE THREATS TO CANADA'S DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

### Overview

- Foreign interference is a serious threat to the security of Canada. We have observed an increase in FI activities in recent years and the use of more sophisticated methods.
- By their nature, FI activities ultimately undermine Canadian sovereignty, interests and values. As such, FI is one of the most important strategic threats to Canada's national security.
- Foreign states use FI activities to interfere with Canada's democratic institutions and political processes in a number of different ways, and at all levels of governments.
- Different states engage in FI activities in Canada, pursue different interests and use different methods. But the result is the same: FI activities undermine Canada's sovereignty, interests and social fabric.
- FI does not include legitimate diplomatic engagement or acceptable foreign state actor lobbying.
- Foreign states target elected and public officials and others with influence over the public policy decision-making process, across all levels of government, and regardless of political affiliation.
  - This includes Members of Parliament, members of provincial legislatures, municipal officials, representatives of Indigenous governments, ministerial and political staff, and public servants. Both current and former officials are targeted.
- **China** is – by far – the most significant threat due to the scope of its FI activities and the level of resources it expends.
  - PRC activities are sophisticated, pervasive, persistent, and directed against all levels of government and civil society across the country.
  - The PRC leverages a vast range of tools in Canada, including the United Front Work Department,  and non-government assets such as community groups and trusted contacts.

1/5

TOP SECRET///LIMITED/CANADIAN EYES ONLY  
2022 10 26

- Despite the examples I will provide today, the PRC's FI efforts are not limited to democratic institutions. Many elements of civil society and Canadian and international non-governmental organizations are targeted.
- **India** engages in FI activities for two main reasons: to influence Canadians politicians toward a pro Government of India stance, and to counter threats to its stability, such as Khalistani extremism.
  - *Government of India officials* use Canada-based proxies, both witting and unwitting, to covertly influence Canadian elected officials, members of the Indian diaspora, and local cultural media outlets.
  - Targets of Indian FI are often members of the Indo-Canadian diaspora.  Indian officials and their proxies may also be specifically targeting non-Indo-Canadian politicians to advance pro-India positions.
  -
- **Canada is not alone** in facing FI threats. Indeed, these activities, particularly those orchestrated by the PRC, pose a significant challenge for most democracies and all of Canada's key allies.
- However, **Canada has been slower than our Five Eyes allies** to respond to the FI threat with legislative and other initiatives, such as proactively publicizing successful disruption of FI activities as a means of deterring future efforts.
  - The United Kingdom publicizes and disseminates FI warning documents to certain office holders and their staff, including naming publicly a UK-based lawyer, Christine Lee, as a Chinese agent.
  - Australia publicized the exposure of undeclared Indian intelligence activities, and sanctioned officials accordingly.
  - These close allies and others, such as the United States, have also updated and modernized legislative authorities for their law enforcement and intelligence services.

2/5

TOP SECRET///LIMITED/CANADIAN EYES ONLY  
2022 10 28

- Many have also introduced foreign agent registries, and increasingly criminalize these types of FI activities. Charges and prosecutions under new foreign interference legislation have also begun.
- In 2019, the **National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians** found that, despite years of consistent CSIS reporting and advice, the Government of Canada's approach left much work to be done.
- While progress has been made on some of the Committee's recommendations, specifically relating to strategy development and governance improvements, there is much to do on developing effective responses to FI.
- Ultimately, state actors are able to conduct FI successfully in Canada because there are no consequences, either legal or political. FI is therefore a low-risk and high-reward endeavour.
- Several cases illustrate the challenge whereby, despite CSIS' significant knowledge of and efforts to counter FI efforts, the significant harm caused by these threats persist.

#### **Way Forward**

- Foreign interference can erode trust and threaten the integrity of our democratic institutions, political system, fundamental rights and freedoms under the *Charter*, and ultimately, our sovereignty.
- The Government's ability to respond to this threat is currently hampered by the lack of legislation, including criminal law and an intelligence-to-evidence framework, and a true whole-of-government approach.

- s. 39 Cabinet Confidence

- s. 39 Cabinet Confidence

- s. 39 Cabinet Confidence

3/5

TOP SECRET///LIMITED/CANADIAN EYES ONLY  
2022 10 26

- Crucially, this modernization had proposed to allow CSIS to advise provincial and municipal institutions on threats, including FI in democratic processes.
- It would also refine and improve the tools CSIS uses to investigate FI, such as data and technology authorities and judicial authorizations.
- While these are important steps in the right direction, we must do more to protect Canada's robust democratic institutions and processes.
  - Other Government of Canada partners, even those without investigative responsibilities, must also take action under their own authorities to detect, disrupt, and publicize FI activities.
- CSIS will continue to build on the model of FI defensive briefings given to elected officials and their staffers developed in the lead up to the 2021 Federal Election of Canada. CSIS endeavours to make such briefings on FI more routine and a regular part of outreach efforts to elected officials at all levels of government (federal, provincial, municipal, and Indigenous). (TAB 3)
- Since May 2021, the Service has delivered defensive briefings on FI to **64** MPs, **13** Federal Ministers, **5** Senators, **12** Provincial/Territorial Premiers or Ministers, **6** Mayors, and **8** municipal councillors.
- We will continue to publish and disseminate analytical products on the topic of FI in Canada to clients throughout the government, as a means of increasing awareness on FI activities and the threat actors behind these activities.

#### Conclusion

- The Government must **build resilience** against FI threats. Clearly articulated strategies, both internal and for public consumption, are required.
- Raising awareness and briefing officials, parliamentarians, and other political leaders on FI threat activities is central to these efforts.
- CSIS can investigate and advise on FI threats, and conduct threat reduction measures as appropriate, but the responsibility to counter these harmful activities must be shared across government, including provincial and municipal partners.

4/5

For Public Release

TOP SECRET///LIMITED/CANADIAN EYES ONLY  
2022 10 26

- Ultimately, better protecting Canadian democratic institutions against FI will require a shift in the Government's perspective and a willingness to take decisive action and impose consequences on perpetrators.
- Until FI is viewed as constituting an existential threat to Canadian democracy and the Government forcefully and actively responds, these threats will persist.

5/5