

For Public Release

RRM Ask – Op Reassurance

Russia has long employed state sponsored disinformation, as part of a broader hybrid toolkit, to achieve its national and geopolitical objectives. The implications of this strategy are clear for all to see when it comes to Ukraine. Since 2014 Maidan Revolution and occupation of Crimea, Russia has waged a relentless disinformation campaign against Ukraine. This campaign has mostly targeted Russians and ethnic Russians in Ukraine but has been wielded in an effort to influence Ukrainians more generally, neighbouring countries and the West.

In the run-up to its invasion, Russia's campaign sharpened, characterising the Ukrainian government as weak, corrupt and a pawn of the West and Ukraine a historical part of Russia; Ukraine and the West as the aggressor responsible for the current crisis; and Russia as an innocent party acting in self-defence and open to diplomacy. Russia used disinformation to create a pretext for invasion and continues to employ disinformation to try to conceal and blur facts on the ground to support its military operations, divide Ukrainians and allies and garner international support for its illegal invasion. Russian information operations vis-a-vis Ukraine, including wide-scale disinformation, are putting additional lives at risk at a moment where access to reliable facts and news is critical. We anticipate that disinformation will continue to play an important role in the Russian tool kit as the aggression evolves, with important implications for Canadian foreign policy.

Global Affairs Canada's tools for countering disinformation targeting Ukraine comprise: ad hoc monitoring and reporting to support decision-making; convening and collaborating with international partners to share information and engage in advocacy; and modest capacity building. In particular, GAC leverages our leadership of the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (G7 RRM), established by Leaders to strengthen coordination to identify and respond to diverse and evolving foreign threats to democracy, including disinformation, at the G7 Summit in Charlevoix in June 2018.

The G7 RRM is coordinate by IOL and more specifically, the RRM Canada team. Besides its coordinating function, RRM Canada leverages its open source data analytics capacity to monitor and detect foreign state sponsored disinformation in real time and collaborates on analytic assessments with international partners. In this context, we also support the Security and Intelligence Threats to Election Task Force during election cycles.

As Russian disinformation becomes top of mind issue for policy makers in Canada and around the world, RRM Canada seeks additional capacity to monitor and detect Russian disinformation both at home and abroad. Therefore, we would seek resources to fund:

- 4 additional data analysts in the EC category (2 EC5 and 2 EC6): to cover disinformation targeting Canadians and Canada in general; disinformation spread in countries bordering/neighboring Russia, including Ukraine; and disinformation aimed at global audiences.
- 1 strategic communications advisor in the IS category (IS5) to support the development of strategic communications products and approaches.
- 1 policy advisor in the FS category to facilitate policy development and advocacy.
- 1 team lead/deputy director at the EC7 level.