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SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRIME MINISTER

c.c.: Janice Charette

Counter Foreign Interference Approach

(For Information)

SUMMARY

- Work is underway to strengthen our capacity counter foreign interference threats and address public concerns and.
- Departments and agencies are working together to develop a coherent work plan to respond to recent events, strengthen protections against foreign interference, enhance governance and processes, and engage and engage effectively with Canadians.
- s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence

BACKGROUND

- The security and intelligence community is taking a number of steps to strengthen our capacity to counter foreign interference threats and address public concerns pertaining to that issue.
- Departments and agencies are working together to develop a coherent work plan with clear deliverables aimed at responding to recent events, strengthening protections against foreign interference, enhancing governance and processes, and effectively engaging with Canadians. Some of these initiatives were outlined in the 6 April 2023 *Update on Recommendations to Counter Foreign Interference in Canada's Democratic Institutions (30-Day Report)*, while others will require further ministerial and/or Cabinet engagement. Following the 23 May report of the Independent Special Rapporteur, the Government will have an opportunity to engage Canadians on progress made and further steps to be made.

Responding to recent events

- ***Affected Members of Parliament and Senators:*** Recent intelligence leaks in the media suggested that some Members of Parliament and Senators have been targeted by foreign interference attempts. While media articles do not always

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accurately portray intelligence agencies' reports and assessment, some politicians have in fact been wittingly or unwittingly involved in foreign interference attempts with various levels of intensity.

- In order to provide further clarity on the status of the foreign interference threats involving current and former Members of Parliament and Senators, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) has been going through its holdings and has created a list of such individuals who have been "targeted" by foreign interference attempts. The list, on which you have been briefed under separate cover, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] CSIS has initiated threat reduction measures (TRM) in some cases and is working with Public Safety Canada to develop advice for engagement with individuals for whom TRM are not possible or recommended. Furthermore, the Minister of Public Safety also intends to send a letter to his parliamentary colleagues in which he will discuss the threat and offer them a security briefing.

- **Intelligence Leaks:** Investigations into the leaks continue. The Privy Council Office (PCO) is working with CSIS and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). You will be briefed in more detail separately.
- PCO is in the process of scheduling briefings with your office, and Ministers Joly, Mendicino, Blair and LeBlanc, to provide further information on the intelligence that has been, or is suspected to have been, leaked to the media, as well as overall intelligence collected on foreign interference attempts in the context of recent federal elections. At the same time PCO will provide advice as to how or engage with the public and media on the matter.

Strengthening protections against foreign interference

- **Protecting Democracy:** As indicated in the *30-Day Report*, PCO is working with other departments to ensure that the members of the Panel of 5 are kept abreast of intelligence developments and are in a constant state of readiness to assume their Panel-related responsibilities. Regular meeting will start this spring.

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- **By-Elections:** s. 39 - Cabinet [redacted], the National Security and Intelligence Advisor (NSIA) has directed the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections (SITE) Task Force to adopt an enhanced operational posture to monitor for and assess foreign interference, to the fullest extent of their mandates, during the upcoming by-elections.

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- **Operational Capacity:** Budget 2023 proposed \$48.9 million over three years for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to protect Canadians from harassment and intimidation, increase its investigative capacity, and more proactively engage with communities at risk of being targeted.

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Enhancing governance and processes

- **Elevating intelligence related to targeted MPs/Senators:** The NSIA, CSIS and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) have implemented an interim process whereby the NSIA will

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from now on be notified of any intelligence report related to a Member of Parliament or Senator, and will then, within a week or faster if required, bring forward the report to a new Deputy Minister Committee on Intelligence Response (DMCIR), which will discuss the intelligence report and decide how to best respond through coordinated operational, enforcement, or policy action. The report and related advice will then be communicated to you in writing in a timely manner, as appropriate. In addition, CSIS and PS are also working on options and advice for how to systematically inform Members of Parliament and Senators about potential threats against them or their families. A separate note on this issue will be provided to you when details of this process are refined.

- Public Safety continues work to establish the office of the Foreign Intelligence Coordinator. As you are aware, Budget 2023 announced \$13.5 million over five years, and \$3.1 million ongoing, for that purpose. Once fully staffed, the Office of the Coordinator will play a leading role in coordinating Government-wide efforts to combat foreign interference. It will also: bolster communications with Canadians on this issue; expand briefings to provincial/territorial, municipal and Indigenous officials; engage with stakeholders to further assess short- and long-term impacts of foreign interference in Canada; and work to increase the coherence of our engagement with allies on the issue.

- ***Coordinating and Disseminating Intelligence:*** The Security and Intelligence community is developing processes and advice to enhance the efficiency and accountability framework related to dissemination and use of intelligence in support of strategic decision making. Several initiatives are underway to develop options seeking to:
 - *better support Cabinet and Ministers*, including by potentially bringing intelligence reports and assessments of horizontal relevance to Cabinet and/or Cabinet Committees, and by better integrating intelligence into Cabinet business;
 - *more consistently disseminate and track intelligence reports across government*, including to Ministers and their teams, and to more effectively “push” or “flag” particularly relevant intelligence reports to Ministers. These efforts will also seek to enhance the intelligence community’s records keeping

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processes; and

- *improve coordination among intelligence agencies and policy and operations centres*, to ensure that intelligence is more consistently accompanied by appropriate advice, and incorporated into policy development.

- **Review:** The past months have brought to light concerns regarding the ability, credibility and effectiveness of NSICOP in fulfilling its mandate, including regarding its review of national security activities conducted in response to foreign interference threats. In the coming weeks, PCO will develop advice to address these concerns and maximize the effectiveness of the Committee.

Communications and Public Engagement

- **Ongoing Engagement with Canadians:** Engagement and consultations will be undertaken with representatives from provinces, territories, indigenous groups and other key stakeholders. These efforts will help build resilience and understanding of the threat, help counter disinformation, and gather new ideas and perspectives on the issue. PS is also considering publishing a Counter Foreign Interference Strategy that would provide Canadians with more information on the threats and the Government's approach to mitigate them.

PCO Comment – feasibility and communications

- Some of the initiatives outlined in this note can be implemented quickly. For instance, unclassified briefings to Members of Parliament and Senators may take place before the end of the Parliamentary session. Threat Reduction Measures and other engagements with Members of Parliament and Senators that have been targeted by foreign interference attempts may also take place in the next few weeks.
- Similarly, mechanisms to more effectively disseminate, flag and track intelligence to Ministers will be implemented over the next months.

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- The May 23 report from the ISR will provide the Government with an opportunity to engage with Canadians on these issues and a potential way forward. Detailed communications advice is forthcoming.

Jody Thomas

Attachments

/Chayer