

For Public Release

RE: RRM Canada within SITE - need to evolve based on changing mandates

From: [redacted]@international.gc.ca>
To: "Denham, Tara -IOD" [redacted]@international.gc.ca>, "Wettlaufer, Robin -IOL" [redacted]@international.gc.ca>
Cc: [redacted]@international.gc.ca>
Date: Mon, 29 May 2023 17:26:12 +0000
Attachments: s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence [redacted]

Solicitor-Client Privilege [redacted]

In 2019 we only got funded for 2 FTEs from the centre (but GAC/IFM covered 6 additional FTEs plus about a 400K ops budget). s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence [redacted] the info is on the other system.

However, in 2022, we got funded for these 8 positions plus 4 more – s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence [redacted] s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence [redacted] we did explicitly state that part of these resources would support our engagement in SITE – including monitoring the domestic space.

In 2022, we got 3 additional FTEs for the Russia team.

[redacted]

From: Denham, Tara -IOD <[redacted]@international.gc.ca>
Sent: May 29, 2023 12:24 PM
To: Wettlaufer, Robin -IOL <[redacted]@international.gc.ca>
Cc: [redacted]@international.gc.ca>
Subject: FW: RRM Canada within SITE - need to evolve based on changing mandates

Email sent.

Also had a DG call today with PCO and PS about the role of the RRM in SITE. They agreed with my argumentation, but as noted below, hesitant to actually make changes. Solicitor-Client Privilege [redacted]

Solicitor-Client Privilege [redacted]

PCO DI also asked about what FTEs we got s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence [redacted] Can you confirm? I thought it was perhaps 1? And do we have the exact wording on what we said we would do? I think that will be important. But I noted that the bulk of our FTEs are s. 39 - Cabinet [redacted] aligned with the mandate noted below.

Let's see where this goes!

From: Denham, Tara -IOD
Sent: May 29, 2023 12:20 PM
To: Hulan, Heidi -IFM [redacted]@international.gc.ca>
Cc: *IFM Advisors <[redacted]@international.gc.ca>; Wettlaufer, Robin -IOL [redacted]@international.gc.ca>; [redacted]@international.gc.ca>
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Heidi,

As noted previously, I am seeking support from yourself and USS to actively advocate with OGDs that the participation and mandate of RRM Canada within SITE needs to evolve. SITE related meetings are now happening bi-weekly at ADM level (Wed this week) and weekly at DM level (Thursday every week). In advance of the meetings I want to share the below to seek your support (and USS – if he agrees) to raise in the respective meetings.

As you know, SITE was triggered in support of the June 19 bi-elections. Since that happened, we are now into 3-4 hrs a day of meetings (from officer level up to DG), briefings, daily reporting, weekly DG meetings, bi-weekly ADM meetings, weekly DM meetings. The RRM Canada team has been fully consumed by the work for over a week – and all other work is needing to stop or significant OT accrued (cost noted below). There is recognition at the DG level that it is reasonable to review the mandates within SITE; that it is justified why the RRM role should change to reflect our mandate; but concern that others may not be willing to take this work on given the high quality of work by RRM to date. However they acknowledge that our high quality work is across everything we do (police stations, Ukraine, etc), and accept that by doing domestic-focused work we will need to sacrifice the other work that is key to advancing foreign policy objectives.

Bottom line: I believe we need to continue to socialize the need to review the mandates in SITE with the end objective of removing domestic monitoring responsibilities from RRM Canada. While I will undertake this at the DG level, **I would like to confirm support at ADM and DM levels** as no department is likely to explore reviewing their mandates related to FI without DM direction. Ideally, I would like agreement to begin discussions now (at ADM and DM meetings) with a proposed way forward for RRM Canada to support domestic departments and Elections Canada related to the current bi-elections and expectations for SITE in the coming month (noting the costs below in terms of not advancing other work). If that isn't feasible, at a minimum I would like agreement that we (GoC) will work towards an end state of extracting RRM Canada from this work so we can focus on our mandate – and domestic departments must take on the work prior to a federal election.

The proposal: GAC (via RRM Canada) remain a member of SITE given the ability and mandate of the RRM to share lessons/tactics seen via RRM partners internationally – alongside the reality that any potential actions in response to attributable foreign interference will require policy guidance from GAC. **GAC is requesting that OGDs within SITE** (which include PS, RCMP, and PCO-DI, all of whom received funding and an expanded mandate related to FI in Canada) **identify existing mandates and capacities with the requirement to confirm who is/will be responsible for monitoring the social media landscape in Canada to identify potential FI.** Recognizing that capacities may not be fully in place to respond to the June 19 bi-elections, RRM Canada could serve as an 'advisor' to whomever is able to monitor the social media landscape, and could do a deep dive in the event that suspicious activity is identified. The current situation presents an opportunity to acknowledge the changes that are required, and a low-risk opportunity to transition this responsibility.

Background:

GAC has been part of SITE, via RRM Canada, since 2019. During General Elections 2019 and 2021, RRM Canada (a) supported SITE's threat assessment function by providing *open* source research and analytics on potential foreign interference and (b) brought experience and expertise of international partners, namely through its leadership on the issue at the G7. RRM Canada assumed the

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responsibility for providing open source research and analytics to safeguard Canada's electoral integrity at a time when no such capacity existed elsewhere in the Government. The RRM has developed this capacity while monitoring information threats internationally, looking in particular at cases where malign information operations had impacted Canada's foreign policy. This included Russian disinformation surrounding the Skripal poisoning in the United Kingdom and the targeting of the White Helmets in Syria.

Since 2019, the mandate of RRM Canada has changed:

- The Prime Minister announced that the RRM would lead efforts to counter Russian disinformation as part of Canada's expansion in Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.
- The RRM Canada has (unresourced) obligations under the Indo-Pacific strategy to monitor and counter foreign information manipulation and interference targeting democracies, including transnational repression;
- Budget 2022 gave the RRM greater responsibilities to coordinate the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism, including on *collective response*.

Budget 2022 and 2023 provided funding to combat foreign interference *within Canada* to Public Safety, RCMP and PCO DI.

Given the pressures on RRM Canada to fulfill its international mandate, the RRM Canada is no longer in a position to divert its resources to the domestic monitoring of Canadian elections and democratic processes. They are no longer uniquely placed to either. The RRM participates in a number of communities of practice across government, including the PCO-IAS-led OSINT interdepartmental working group, the National Security and Data Working Group, the TBS CIO Open Source guidance committee, and other groupings convened by the intelligence community. The capabilities do exist elsewhere in government, including in partner departments with domestic mandates. The real value-added the RRM can bring to the table through monitoring of the international information space is in providing the broader international picture regarding global information threats facing democracies, in hearing from other partners from the G7RRM, and in coordinating response. The team's police stations reporting, for instance, has demonstrated the truly global nature of the problem, using open source methodologies to uncover more than 50 extra-territorial "police stations" across the G7, other democracies, as well as belt-and-road countries. In sharing this information with G7RRM partners, the RRM hopes to catalyze collective efforts to respond to the threat – far stronger than if we go it alone.

There is a significant **opportunity cost for the RRM** in turning its attention to the bi-election:

- Will need to pause Police Station monitoring. The RRM has found approximately 60 more stations across the G7 and beyond, **but the information is disappearing fast as the PRC is moving to delete digital evidence. There is a risk that a pause in this work in order to focus on the by-election will mean the digital footprints will no longer be there to find.**
- Will need to **pause monitoring of Russian and Chinese disinformation in priority areas, including in Ukraine and eastern Europe, as well as Taiwan.**
- Will need to **pause work on the RRM's response framework** to information manipulation and interference, as the policy team will need to focus its efforts in supporting the engagement of senior officials in SITE at the DM, ADM, DG, and Director level, in addition to political party briefings, etc.
- Will need to pause efforts to stand-up proposed new G7 Working Groups, including on collective response, Transnational Repression, Data Analytics in the Indo-Pacific region, and Sub-National Interference.

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- Will need to pause outreach/engagement activities in priority regions, with impact on response/action to counter disinformation.
- We may need to cancel long-standing commitments to G7 RRM counterparts for coordination visits with key partners -- which brings reputational risks.