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## INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT

# Moscow's War in Ukraine: Implications for Russian FI Activities in Canada



Intelligence Assessments Branch  
Direction de l'évaluation du renseignement

Canada



2023 05 19

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CSIS IA2023-24/24

# Moscow's War in Ukraine: Implications for Russian FI Activities in Canada<sup>1</sup>

Disruption and mitigation of hostile activities of state actors (HASAs), including Russian foreign influenced (FI) and disinformation activities, remain a priority for the Government of Canada (GC). Although Russia is not a significant foreign interference actor in relation to Canadian federal elections, it continues nonetheless to pose an FI threat<sup>2</sup>. In spite of a visible decline in Russian FI and disinformation activities in Canada since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Russian state-linked actors have continued their attempts to engage in FI activities.

[Redacted]

## Key Assessments

- Although Canada differs from other Western allies as a target of the Russian FI and disinformation activities (see text box on page 2 for details), and the overall impact of such activities in Canada is being [Redacted] such activities should not be underestimated as Canada is not completely immune to their effects.
- [Redacted] have remained imperative in supporting Russia's FI activities, despite Russia's loss of reputation in most Western countries. (S)
- Disinformation and FI activities [Redacted] in Canada will continue in an effort to discredit GC policies on Ukraine, smear Ukrainian diaspora and their organizations in Canada, and spread Russian disinformation regarding the conflict in Ukraine. (S)
- In general, the Russian diaspora is not united in their views on the Russian aggression against Ukraine. [Redacted] As a result, the Russian government will continue its attempts to influence and control the Russian diaspora in Canada. (S)
- Some of Moscow's narratives may be further spread or amplified by the few remaining pro-Russian agents of influence and proxies who fill the social media/internet space. (S)

**Current FI Landscape in Canada**

[Redacted]

[Redacted] FI activities aimed at spreading pro-Russian narratives and disinformation vis-à-vis Ukraine, attempts to influence and divide Canadians on the same, and efforts to counter Canada's stance on the conflict in Ukraine. (S)

<sup>1</sup> [Redacted] (S)

<sup>2</sup> According to the CSIS Act, among the defined threats to the security of Canada are "foreign-influenced activities within or relating to Canada that are detrimental to the interests of Canada and are clandestine or deceptive or involved a threat to any person. Foreign interference is understood in this context as the most malign form of foreign-influenced activities. (U)





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**Background**

1. [redacted]  
 [redacted] Russia's FI and  
 disinformation operations against the West [redacted]  
 [redacted] including in Canada. That said, other tools have remained and continue to  
 be used to conduct Russia's FI activities; these tools remain instrumental in supporting Russia's foreign policy and  
 other strategic objectives in Canada. (S)

**How Canada Differs from other Western allies as a target of Russian FI**

- Canada is [redacted] for Russian FI and disinformation operations as the United States, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Poland, the Baltic States or other allies.
- Canada has little economic or strategic dependency on Russia, providing Russia with little-to-no leverage.
- Major federal parties in Canada generally have similar negative views on Russia.
- Canada has [redacted]
- Similarly, Canada has a limited number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations that could be organically used by the Kremlin.
- Due to a strong Ukrainian tradition and Canada's consistent support for Ukraine, the Kremlin's FI and disinformation tactics have focussed on Ukraine. (S)

**Spread of Propaganda and Disinformation by Russian Officials** [redacted]

2. In the aftermath of the 2014 invasion of Ukraine, [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] Russian officials have attempted to  
 influence Canadians by (i) casting doubt on the Western narrative on the war, (ii) denouncing and discrediting the GC's  
 support to Ukraine and activities of Ukraine, and, (iii) distracting public opinion from other Russian actions. (S)

[redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] disinformation campaigns in Canada. [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] was sent [redacted] in [redacted] 2023, another [redacted]  
 [redacted]





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- In addition, various attempts to spread disinformation and Russian narratives [redacted] (S)

3. According to a [redacted] 2022 [redacted]

Support to Global Information Operations and Disinformation Campaign [redacted]

[redacted]

### Preparing Diaspora [redacted] in Canada

- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]





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Attempts to Influence and Co-opt the Russian Diaspora in Canada

6. Given the size of the Russian compatriot community<sup>4</sup> and the number of organizations in Canada, [redacted] that the Russian Federation continues to perceive the diaspora as a vital part of implementing its objectives in Canada. It is [redacted] that the Kremlin recognizes the potential of the diaspora to conduct propaganda and influence campaigns with the aim of undermining Canadian policies and dividing society on issues such as Ukraine. (S)

- Shortly after the full invasion of Ukraine, the Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots (CCRC)<sup>5</sup> [redacted]
- In [redacted] 2022, Moscow attempted to influence views of the Russian diaspora in Canada regarding the invasion of Ukraine. [redacted]
- In [redacted] 2022, [redacted]

Renewed Attempts to Control the Russian Diaspora in Canada

7. [redacted] some diaspora leaders have attempted to distance themselves from the Russian government, [redacted] manipulation of the Russian diaspora in Canada to advance the Russian Federation's interests and gain support for the Kremlin will almost certainly continue. [redacted]

4 According to the 2016 census, over 622,000 individuals who self-identify as "Russians" were living in Canada. The largest communities are located in Toronto, British Columbia (mainly in the Vancouver area), Montréal, Alberta (Calgary and Edmonton) and Ottawa / Gatineau. It should be noted, however, that the Russian diaspora is diverse and by no means unified. (S)

5 Most of the Russian diaspora organizations in Canada are members of the Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots (CCRC), a national umbrella organization established in almost every country with Russian diaspora. CCRC and its executive board are essentially the leadership of the diaspora in Canada. The Council enjoys formal assistance from the Russian government, which overtly supports members by promoting the Russian language and culture, organizing and financing social and educational events, supporting veterans, and offering participation in a number of programs directed and organized from Moscow. (C)

[redacted]





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[Redacted]

8. It is [Redacted] that several events since February 2022 have contributed to the [Redacted]

[Redacted]

(TS//CEO)

9. In [Redacted] 2022, the [Redacted]

[Redacted]

(TS//CEO)

**Compatriot** [Redacted]

Given the importance of the diaspora in the

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

10. Since [Redacted] 2022, some [Redacted] in spreading disinformation and conducting FI activities. Their malign efforts to shape public opinion in support of Russia's objectives in Ukraine, and more broadly, have suggested that they have deliberately acted in Moscow's interests. (S)

- In [Redacted] 2022, [Redacted]
- [Redacted]





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[Redacted]

- In [Redacted] 2023,

[Redacted]

11. In addition to the above-noted activities, [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted] have used such opportunities to spread pro-Russian narratives and disinformation regarding Ukraine and to seek support for Russia's objectives. (S)

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]

(TS//CEO)

**Pro-Russian FI Proxies?**

- In [Redacted] 2023, [Redacted]—and some of their diaspora organizations—whose rhetoric has reportedly been anti-NATO, anti-West and in support of the Russian regime.
- The local [Redacted] community in [Redacted] Canada has been influenced by individuals who have ties to the [Redacted] which is [Redacted]
- [Redacted] also has a strong presence in [Redacted] and [Redacted] the [Redacted] of these communities has been actively pushing pro-Russian agendas. (S)

12. In addition to the above, [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted] in the Kremlin's FI and disinformation efforts. One such NGOs, Creative Diplomacy (aka PICREADI) hosted dozens of young journalists, public policy specialists and graduate students, including Canadians, at annual events over the course of past four years. PICREADI was allegedly formed to engage in Russian public diplomacy. However, the program was funded by the Russian government and the Federal Security Service (FSB), and served essentially as a vehicle for Russia's FI activities. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]



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**Outlook/Impact**

13. Moscow's attack on Ukraine has damaged its image worldwide and reduced its global reach. However, the Kremlin still has a range of options at its disposal and is highly motivated to use FI and disinformation operations to achieve its long-term goals, including [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] that Moscow will almost certainly attempt to control and use the Russian-speaking diaspora in Canada in its FI and disinformation activities. While the Russian diaspora and its organizations may not have a broad impact on Canadian society, their influence becomes more apparent when consolidated with other organizations and their online social presence, pro-Russian proxies or agents of influence, and RF's global disinformation efforts. For these reasons, these attempts to use Russian-Canadians to divide Canadian society regarding the war in Ukraine should not be underestimated. (S)

14. At the same time, Russia's FI options in Canada are currently [REDACTED] in scope. [REDACTED] that disinformation and FI activities based largely out of [REDACTED] in Canada—at Moscow's direction—will continue with the aim to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] regarding the conflict in Ukraine. Some of these narratives may be further spread or amplified via a combination of remaining witting and unwitting pro-Russian proxies and anonymous sources to fill social media/internet space. (S)

[REDACTED]  
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