

For Public Release

GOVERNANCE

BACKGROUND

- Canada's ability to adequately address HASA is limited by the absence of a holistic approach to consider the entire threat picture, identify all available tools and options to respond, and examine potential broader implications of responses to malign activities.
- Departments and agencies each have their own specific roles, mandates and legislation to follow when responding to HASA. Given the wide ranging nature of the threat posed by HASA, many issues often result in competing foreign policy and national security considerations beyond any single department/agency's mandate. This diffuse governance model creates a gap in cohesiveness, efficiency and harmonisation amongst other stakeholders.
- The current decentralized HASA governance system lacks a defined entity with accountability to provide a coherent whole of government approach to counter HASA and assume responsibility to respond strategically to HASA incidents and issues.
- In its 2019 Annual Report, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) recommended that the Government of Canada "develop practical, whole-of-government operational and policy mechanisms to identify and respond" to HASA, and that engagement with other levels of government and law enforcement be more consistent.
- Further, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the willingness of threat actors to leverage new and unique global crises to advance their objectives, and underscored the importance of collaboration including with non-traditional S&I stakeholders.
- The threat posed by HASA has reached a level that requires a dedicated structure to create a clear leadership role within the Government of Canada for HASA risks and issues, and enhance collaboration with all stakeholders.

OPTIONS

Option 1: Create a New Counter HASA Coordinator, Supported by Intelligence Fusion Capabilities¹

- As outlined in the Memorandum, Canada's *Counter HASA Strategy* will provide the framework for an enhanced, coordinated whole-of-government approach to address and respond to HASA via a three-pronged action plan: *Detect; Strengthen; and Act.*

¹ This proposal does not necessarily seek to create a new intelligence assessment body. Rather, this proposal points to the need for coordinated intelligence to address the threat of HASA. While one option could be the creation of a new task force, it could also be an expansion of SITE, a re-orientation of ITAC, or even PCO IAS.

[APG]

For Public Release

- To ensure that the *Counter HASA Strategy* is implemented and achieves the desired effect, it will require an oversight mechanism. The recommended approach involves the creation of a new dedicated body headed by a Counter HASA Coordinator, and supported by a dedicated team, to operationalize Canada's *Counter HASA Strategy* and update the Strategy as required to ensure it keeps the pace with the evolving threat environment.
- The Counter HASA Coordinator would enable the Government of Canada to shift to a more proactive approach to countering HASA by:
 - Messaging clearly that the Government of Canada believes this issue is serious enough to warrant a Coordinator who would not only serve as the focal point within government, but also for stakeholders external to government;
 - Providing leadership across the security and intelligence community, and beyond, to address strategic, cross-cutting issues related to HASA in a coordinated manner;
 - Harmonizing existing outreach efforts with at-risk sectors;
 - Providing strategic advice to interdepartmental senior management on HASA threats, and mitigation approaches;
 - Re-orienting overarching national security governance towards HASA; and
 - Enhancing partnerships between federal departments/agencies, other levels of government and non-government partners.
- The Counter HASA Coordinator would serve as focal point for public engagement to enhance awareness of how the Government of Canada is addressing HASA-related threats. For instance, the Counter HASA Coordinator could promote transparency with communications materials and engagement activities aimed at shedding light on what happens after a report is made, how that information is managed, and what measures could be taken by the Government of Canada.
- To achieve this, the Counter HASA Coordinator will be supported by engagement and strategic communications teams (*Please see Annex TBD – Strategic Communications and Engagement Strategy*).
- Of note, this proposal does not seek the authority to direct departments/agencies but rather, seeks to ensure coordination across all federal departments/agencies involved in the *Counter HASA Strategy*.
- The Counter HASA Coordinator would be supported by an intelligence fusion group made up of CSE, CSIS, GAC and RCMP to cover all threats targeting the five priority sectors outlined in the *Counter HASA Strategy (Democratic Processes and Government Institutions; Communities; Economic Prosperity; International Affairs and Defence; and Critical Infrastructure)*. This intelligence fusion group would have the ability to include ad-hoc members as required, depending on the nature of the threat.
- The intelligence fusion group would provide situational awareness to the Counter HASA Coordinator of current and emerging threat activities, and proactively identify issues requiring collective action. The intelligence fusion group reporting would be tailored for

[APG]

For Public Release

specific audiences with varying classifications to ensure that all stakeholders, including federal stakeholders (both inside and outside the S&I community) and non federal stakeholders, receive the timely information and updates they require, regardless of clearance levels or access to secure systems.

Option 2: Designate a Lead Department/Agency Responsible for HASA Coordination

- As with Option 1, the *Counter HASA Strategy* would be administered by a designated department/agency. However, this option would not require any changes to machinery of government as this oversight role would be assigned to an existing entity (Branch or Directorate) within the Government of Canada.
- Many of the roles/responsibilities outlined in Option 1 would remain, including enhancing coordination amongst federal stakeholders, harmonizing existing outreach efforts and providing strategic advice to senior management.
- Unlike Option 1, rather than having a focal point for engagement on HASA, departments/agencies would continue to undertake their respective outreach activities in accordance with their mandates, but the Lead Department/Agency Responsible for HASA would seek to enhance linkages between existing efforts where possible.

CONSIDERATIONS

- The Counter HASA Coordinator would be largely modelled on Australia's National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator. In its 2019 report, the NSICOP explicitly recommended that the Government of Canada consider establishing a similar mechanism. It should be noted, however, that Australia manages many horizontal files through the designation of "coordinators" based in lead departments. This would be novel in Canada.
- The Counter HASA Coordinator could be housed at Public Safety in support of the Minister of Public Safety's legislative responsibility to exercise leadership at the national level relating to public safety pursuant to section 4(2) of the *Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Act* and would support the Minister's responsibilities for the coordination of entities within the Public Safety portfolio.
- Some stakeholders have indicated that the Counter HASA Coordinator could also be housed at PCO, reporting to the NSIA. However, there are risks associated with this role being housed at PCO. This includes the possibility that any outreach activities undertaken by the Counter HASA Coordinator could be perceived by the public as partisan given the closeness of the NSIA to the PM, and the lack of Ministerial accountability should the Counter HASA Coordinator report to the NSIA.
- Consideration could be given to house the Economic Security Centre, s. 39 - Cabinet s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence under the Counter HASA Coordinator or the Lead Department/Agency Responsible for HASA Coordination to

[APG]

For Public Release

further streamline engagement and outreach activities.

- The creation of a dedicated HASA Threat Assessment Centre was considered, as it would more closely align with international best practices. However, this proposed approach seeks to limit resources and minimize potential duplication of effort by modeling existing successful models already in place (e.g., the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force).
- It is recognized that covering all HASA-related threats may be too broad of a scope for the intelligence fusion group. For this reason, it is proposed that the intelligence fusion group be a pilot project over two years to provide time to assess the success of this initiative.
- Federal departments/agencies have conducted engagement and outreach to non-federal stakeholders on specific files that touch on HASA. However, these efforts have been inconsistent and delivered in a piecemeal fashion by individual department/agencies. Under Option 2, potential gaps and overlaps between different activities may not be fully addressed, which could result in a less coordinated approach for engagement.
- While Option 2 would likely not require Cabinet approval, there are risks that exist with this approach, including the possibility that efforts by the Lead Department/Agency for HASA to coordinate federal stakeholders may be limited by a lack of Cabinet directive.
- Additionally, Option 2 may not fully address gaps identified in the Government of Canada's response to HASA. Having a dedicated entity to focus solely on HASA would be commensurate with the threat activity observed, which is only expected to grow, and would better enable the Government of Canada to be proactive in addressing current and emerging threats. Adding the responsibility of Lead Department/Agency for HASA to the responsibilities of an existing entity risks keeping the Government of Canada in its current reactive mode.

[APG]