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CANADIAN EYES ONLY**Deputy Minister Committee for Intelligence Response (DMCIR)****Meeting Minutes****Thursday, 12 October 2023, 1400-1500**

80 Wellington

**Attendance**

Jody Thomas (NSIA) chaired the meeting.

Members in attendance: David Vigneault (CSIS), Tricia Geddes (PS), Caroline Xavier (CSE), David Morrison (GAC), Mark Flynn (RCMP), Dan Rogers (PCO-DNSIA), Paul MacKinnon (PCO-DSG), Stephen de Boer (PCO-FDPA)

PCO support staff in attendance: Martin Green (PCO-IAS & DMCIR Secretary), Marie-Hélène Chayer (PCO-NSC), [REDACTED], Bridget Walshe (PCO-S&I), [REDACTED].

Guest speakers in attendance: [REDACTED] (CSE-SME)

**Introduction**

**The Chair's** opening remarks noted the two updates and three intelligence reports on the agenda, and emphasized a desire to seek tracker updates from the DMCIR Secretary.

**Update: PRC Overseas Police Stations – Public Safety**

**The Chair** invited PS to present an update on the 18 May DMCIR tasking related to PRC Overseas Police Stations (OPS). PS noted that the lengthy note on the topic had been circulated to DMCIR members in advance of the 12 October meeting. The note seeks to provide an update on our understanding and assessment of PRC OPS, but gaps remain on how to respond.

PS emphasized the bottom line, which is that the role and mandate of the Foreign Interference (FI) Coordinator has not yet been determined. PS highlighted some "lessons learned" from this tasking, including the timeliness of a response and challenges with coordinating multiple threat issues within the Canadian intelligence community. PS reiterated the core issue, in their view: whether the FI Coordinator should play a strategic/policy or operational coordination role. PS noted that, on the operational side, CSIS already has a mandate for conducting Threat Reduction Measures (TRMs), while the RCMP has its own investigation.

The RCMP acknowledged that at times, the statement that there are "ongoing investigations" can be used as an excuse to not pursue options, when in reality other Departments could look into their own measures (*i.e.* GAC and diplomatic options;

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IRCC and visa options; CSIS and TRMs, etc.). RCMP noted that when these efforts do get off the ground, there is always another chaotic priority which comes up.

**The Chair asked** who leads strategic coordination on FI, if not the FI Coordinator, The RCMP suggested that the word "coordination" is wrong, and what it should mean is "deconfliction" versus trying to achieve combined effects. The RCMP advised that there must be a lead across departments, at the strategic and operational level.

Citing previous, separate conversations with some DMCIR members on the meaning of "direct versus coordinate," DNSIA noted that several operational coordination tables exist, although their effects are sometimes nebulous, which belies systemic vulnerabilities in such coordination efforts. DNSIA expressed support for former coordination, suggesting that the announcement of the National Security Council (NSC) could provide an opportunity for PCO to play a central role. DNSIA noted that PRC OPS was not the only issue requiring coordination this year, and gave the example of the situations with the High Altitude Balloons as well as Indian FI.

The RCMP acknowledged that the level of disclosures are often complicated when investigations are ongoing, and the continuing issue of "intel to evidence." Citing an example of [REDACTED] with third party status for Federal Policing National Security (FPNS), the RCMP noted a preference for increased collaboration.

The DNSIA suggested that an exercise on roles and responsibilities was needed, and that actions have already been taken, such as a governance review.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] there is room to improve the role and work of the FI Coordinator. For two years, CSIS has faced calls from the Sergeant-at-Arms for a briefing to parliamentarian, who want to be briefed specifically by "operators." CSIS expressed a view that more could be done, citing an example [REDACTED]

CSIS noted that the present case of the PRC OPS is just one manifestation of Chinese FI in Canada, but playing "whack-a-mole" and approaching FI in a piece-by-piece manner will ultimately mean that we are unsuccessful in addressing it. CSIS noted the need for an amplified FI Coordinator, one that has strategic plans to which to react.

**The Chair agreed** when CSIS noted that as the public inquiry work advances and more becomes public, it will reveal that the Canadian intelligence community has struggled to address FI. CSIS also called for clear expectations on who should do what. PS noted that there is no single point of failure on FI, and that the difference between strategic and operational coordination must be unpacked. **The Chair** noted that Canada does not have an FI Strategy.

GAC advised that, per the original Spanish NGO report on PRC OPS, many OPS have been successful in convincing people to return to China, and that the PRC likes these tools. In GAC's view, we should not interpret OPS as about us, but as about PRC views

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of Chinese people abroad, and expected loyalties. GAC called for a "level set" on what FI is and is not, noting that this is not unrelated to a country's geopolitical shifts. While Canada benefitted from globalization and openness, both are proving to be an Achilles heel, and the broad moniker of "FI" is not always helpful when addressing a massive problem, which is different across different actors (i.e. India and China).

CSE noted that because the major FI actors are known to us, the community should give the FI Coordination priorities, to be developed into a strategy that must highlight these priorities. GAC agreed that calling all activities "FI" is not helpful, and neither are certain immature discussions and a whack-a-mole approach, to which the Committee agreed. The RCMP cited an internal differentiation of foreign influence vs. foreign interference vs. hostile activities. GAC later noted the need to segment the market, of a state versus its intent, citing gaps at even this conceptual level.

DNSIA agreed on the need for a strategy to break down the broad category of FI into manageable chunks. Several members suggested that, to define the role of the FI Coordinator and help it better address the FI challenge, the intelligence community needs to give that office additional guidance and taskings.

**The Chair suggested** that the FI Coordinator role would be better placed at PCO to provide coordination from the centre. Citing the urgent need for coordination and action, the Chair suggested going "back to basics" and establishing a new mandate, policy, and framework for the office of the FI Coordinator.

PS agreed on the need to develop possible models and potential options that would enhance the strength of the FI coordination function. Citing DM meetings on China and FI over the summer that led to no real outcomes, **the Chair motioned** a conversation with the Clerk to seek direction on the way forward.

PCO-DSG provided comments on considerations around the machinery decision on the FI Coordinator, and that with recent experience it may warrant further review to achieve desired objectives and effects. PCO-DSG noted that one officer would not bring about the necessary change, but bigger changes would be needed, with at least some resources located at PCO.

**The Chair advised** the Committee of the Clerk's view of the NSIA Branch, as a function until itself, delivering work akin to an NSC.

Acknowledging the need for a strategic reset on FI, the RCMP noted the requirement to also think of operational coordination, despite aversion to PCO-led coordination at the RCMP. **The Chair suggested** that PS retain a function for operational coordination, to that end.

GAC agreed that the role of the NSA/NSIA is different across states, and stated that each federal department and agency should house an OSINT capability like GAC's Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM). According to GAC, the RRM was supposed to have an external mandate, not a domestic one, and it is not sustainable to load everything related to mis- and disinformation for the GoC onto that team. GAC

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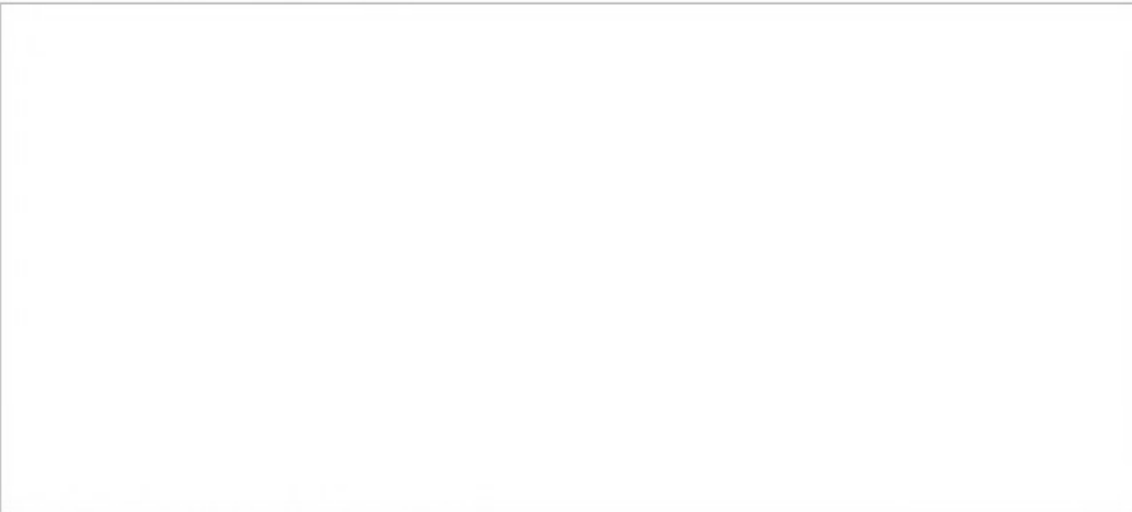
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suggested that RRM reports have a lighter touch, with a shorter and snappier bottom line, as the long-form reports are neither sustainable nor scaleable. **The Chair noted** that she and the DNSIA had previously discuss a project on OSINT.

**CSIS asked for** specificity on timelines and clarity vis-à-vis the FI Coordinator position, noting an urgency to take action. **The Chair reiterated** the action item on having a conversation with the Clerk, alongside the DNSIA and PCO-DSG, with a separate, follow-on conversation with PS related to the role and mandate of the FI Coordinator. The Committee agreed to hold a bespoke meetings of select Deputies once the discussion with the Clerk takes place.

**The Chair** concluded the discussion and invited CSE to introduce the first briefing item.

[REDACTED] CSE



**The Chair** concluded the discussion.

#### **Briefing: India – CSE**

CSE introduce [REDACTED] utilizing a 2007 book, *Cold Terror*, published by a Canadian author. [REDACTED] the results of which should be directed to PCO-Comms. CSE also agreed to connect with PCO-Comms on [REDACTED] **The Chair noted** that the Clerk asked PCO-Comms to step up efforts on combatting disinformation.

**The Chair concluded** the discussion and motioned the following action items:

- CSE [REDACTED] to work with PCO-Comms to develop responsive lines should India use material from *Cold Terror* to criticize Canada.
- NSIA, DNSIA, and PCO-DSG to speak with the Clerk on clarifying the FI Coordinator role/mandate, and convene ad hoc DM meeting to discuss.

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