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Public Inquiry Into Foreign Interference
in Federal Electoral Processes and
Democratic Institutions

Enquête publique sur l'ingérence étrangère
dans les processus électoraux et les
institutions démocratiques fédérales

Interview Summary: Mr. Vincent Rigby, Mr. David Morrison, Mr. Michael MacDonald and Mr. Martin Green

Senior national security intelligence officials and former officials from the **Privy Council Office (“PCO”)** were interviewed in a panel format by Commission counsel on February 16, 2024. The interview was held in a secure environment and included references to classified information. This is the public version of the classified interview summary that was entered into evidence in the course of the Commission’s *in camera* hearings held in February and March 2024.

Notes to Reader:

- This preamble and the text contained in [square brackets] are explanatory notes provided by Commission Counsel for the assistance of the reader.
- This summary has been prepared pursuant to subclause (a)(iii)(C)(II) of the Commission’s Terms of Reference. It discloses the evidence pertinent to clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of the Commission’s Terms of Reference that, in the opinion of the Commissioner, would not be injurious to the critical interests of Canada or its allies, national defence or national security.
- This summary contains information that relates to the Commission’s mandate under clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of its Terms of Reference. Information provided during the interview that relates to other aspects of the Commission’s Terms of Reference has been omitted from this summary, but may be adduced by the Commission at a later stage of its proceedings.
- This summary should be read in conjunction with the Institutional Report prepared by PCO (the “**PCO IR**”) and the public summary of the *in camera* examination of the interviewees.

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Presentation of the Interviewees

- [1] David Morrison was appointed the Foreign and Defence Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister (“FDPA”) in 2018, serving in this role until 2022. While serving as FDPA, he simultaneously served as acting National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister (“NSIA”) from early December 2019 to late January 2020 (between the retirement of Greta Bossenmaier and the appointment of Vincent Rigby), and again from July 2021 to January 11, 2022 (between the retirement of Mr. Rigby and the appointment of Jody Thomas).
- [2] Vincent Rigby was appointed the NSIA in January 2020, and served in this role until June 2021.
- [3] Michael MacDonald served as the Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet of the Security and Intelligence Secretariat, which supports the NSIA, from May 2020 to June 4, 2023, and now works at the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (“TBS”). He served as temporary NSIA from July 16, 2021 to August 4, 2021, while Mr. Morrison was on temporary leave.
- [4] Martin Green serves as the Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet of the Intelligence Assessment Secretariat (“IAS”), which also supports the NSIA, and has done so since 2015.
- [5] The NSIA is housed within the Privy Council Office (“PCO”), and provides policy and operational advice, as well as intelligence, to the Prime Minister (“PM”) and Cabinet on matters related to national security, including foreign intelligence. The NSIA is responsible for convening the security and intelligence community to support the coordination of government responses to all types of foreign interference (“FI”) threats.

Background and Mandate

Preliminary Correction to PCO IR

- [6] Mr. Morrison noted that the PCO IR does not list his appointment as acting NSIA between Ms. Bossenmaier’s retirement and Mr. Rigby’s appointment.

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NSIA Roles and Responsibilities

- [7] Mr. Rigby explained that the NSIA's role is three-fold: The NSIA (i) advises the PM on national security matters; (ii) coordinates the security and intelligence ("S&I") community; and (iii) liaises with the Five Eyes [the intelligence agencies of Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand] and other stakeholders. He noted that the COVID-19 pandemic was underway during his tenure as NSIA, and COVID-19-related matters formed the bulk of his work during his term as NSIA.
- [8] Mr. Morrison explained that the majority of his work as NSIA centred heavily on national security, such as the evolving situation in Ukraine and ultimate invasion by Russian forces, as well as efforts towards the release of the two Michaels [Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor]. Given the range of matters at play, the coordination function of the NSIA role predominated while he held the position.
- [9] Mr. Green clarified after the interview that one of the roles of the IAS is to send intelligence reports to the NSIA, the PM and the **Prime Minister's Office ("PMO")**. The IAS focuses primarily on foreign intelligence, but has recently started incorporating domestic intelligence into its reports. Mr. Green explained that marrying foreign intelligence and domestic intelligence capabilities is a challenge at IAS and across the Five Eyes intelligence communities.

Intelligence Products Received by the NSIA

- [10] Mr. Green noted that intelligence products received by the NSIA must be both policy-relevant and also policy-neutral, failing which there might be a tendency to use intelligence to support a pre-established and desired policy outcome. He noted that it is important to distinguish between raw and assessed intelligence. Raw intelligence must be approached with nuance, as it lacks context. Generally, the PM should receive assessed intelligence, and not one-off raw intelligence reports.
- [11] Mr. Rigby stated that "intelligence" is a broad term. He explained that intelligence can be open-source (e.g., news articles, diplomatic reporting), or closed-source (e.g. signals intelligence, human intelligence). Open-source intelligence sometimes helped to inform the advice he offered to the PM. Generally speaking he approached raw intelligence with

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caution. For example, if he received a single-source report and the source had an uncorroborated reporting history, he would read and evaluate the report with healthy skepticism. Mr. Rigby noted that he would be hesitant to circulate such a report widely, as raw, unconfirmed intelligence can often be misinterpreted without the appropriate context. Further consideration included whether the intelligence was actionable.

[12] Mr. Morrison explained that in his various roles, he has always been a consumer of intelligence. He confirmed that the NSIA reads numerous types of classified and open-source intelligence (e.g. media, social media, diplomatic reporting), and digests a wide array of information each day. The essence of providing advice to the PM is being well-informed, and intelligence is one source of that.

[13] Mr. Morrison explained that raw intelligence rarely formed the basis for immediate action. He recalled three instances where an intelligence report required immediate action. In each case, the intelligence was signals intelligence, which can be more reliable than human intelligence. The first case involved an event that took place outside of Canada [unrelated to foreign interference, Canadian elections and democratic processes] and its protracted aftermath. He briefed the PM immediately. The second case involved a significant piece of intelligence disseminated in the weeks following the 2021 federal election concerning potential FI during this election involving a specific country. Mr. Morrison again flagged the report immediately within government. He viewed this intelligence as the closest thing to a “smoking gun” that he had seen during his tenure as NSIA. The third case involved intelligence on a threat to Canadians [unrelated to foreign interference, Canadian elections and democratic processes]. Again, Mr. Morrison flagged the report to his staff, and again, he was told action was being taken.

[14] Mr. Rigby recalled two instances in which intelligence formed the basis for immediate action. The first is related to the first item identified by Mr. Morrison above. The second was related to Russia [in a situation unrelated to Canadian elections or democratic processes].

[15] Mr. MacDonald noted that as Assistant Secretary, Security and Intelligence Secretariat, the best intelligence he received was intelligence that was operationally actionable (i.e., intelligence that would list names, targets, motivation, locations). Mr. MacDonald provided

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a series of specific instances where intelligence led to a response (i.e. this type of intelligence enabled relevant agencies to take actions to monitor or halt the threat activity described, and enabled Mr. MacDonald to monitor the actions taken and ensure threats were being addressed).

[16] Mr. MacDonald added that assessed intelligence was also helpful, especially when it identified trends. In such circumstances, policy actors are able to address these trends in policy proposals under consideration.

[17] Mr. Morrison commented that intelligence containing specific names can be helpful. However, he acknowledged that there are legislative and privacy policy restrictions that apply to naming Canadians in intelligence reporting. Without this information, he explained, it can be harder to make connections between various intelligence products.

Role in Committees

[18] The panel discussed the various committees that pertain to foreign interference [nine committees at the Assistant Deputy Minister (“ADM”) level and corresponding committees at the DM level]:

Deputy Minister Committee Intelligence Response (“DMCIR”)

[19] Mr. Morrison noted this committee was set up less than a year ago.

Deputy Minister Intelligence Committee (“DMIC”)

[20] Mr. Rigby noted this committee was set up to consider strategic intelligence assessments as well as more operational single source reporting that might require an immediate response. He added that the committee met regularly under his leadership.

Deputy Ministers Foreign Interference Committee (“DMFI”)

[21] Mr. Morrison noted that DMFI has existed for approximately one year, and is predominantly occupied with the legislative response to FI (e.g., the Foreign Agent Registry, etc.). It meets weekly.

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Deputy Ministers Committee on Operational Coordination (“DMOC”)

- [22] Mr. Morrison explained that DMOC is concerned with information-sharing. The committee meets weekly, and works well. He noted that the DMCIR meeting takes place in the hour before the DMOC meeting to focus on intelligence.
- [23] Mr. Rigby expressed that DMOC was the most important body for him as NSIA. He would generally open the meeting with updates on national security concerns and his reports to the PM. The Deputy Ministers would then bring their own information and updates on issues they faced.

Assistant Deputy Minister National Security Operations Committee (“ADM NS OPS”)

- [24] Mr. MacDonald explained that ADM NS OPS met weekly. It was the mirror of DMOC on the intelligence side. Mr. MacDonald would brief the discussions at ADM NS OPS to the NSIA in advance of the NSIA’s attendance at DMOC.

Assistant Deputy Minister Tactical Committee (“ADMT”)

- [25] Mr. MacDonald stated that ADMT was created about a year and a half ago. This committee deals with cutting-edge operational issues. For example, if Communications Security Establishment ran an active cyber operation, the issues and operational needs would be discussed at this committee.

Deputy Minister Electoral Security Coordinating Committee (“DM ESCC”)

- [26] The witnesses were referred to a memorandum to the PM that describes the performance of DM ESCC.
- [27] Mr. MacDonald explained that during the elections, the elections security architecture is in operation. During the election, an ADM committee that mirrors the DM ESCC was also created, and met to discuss election and security issues, such as disinformation campaigns that would prevent individuals from reporting to polling stations. Although the document referred to contains a “lessons learned” for the 2019 DM ESCC architecture,

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none of the panellists were aware of an equivalent document for 2021. Mr. Rigby added that there is a **Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force (SITE TF)** After-Action Report for 2019 that contains broader “lessons learned” for the 2021 election in general.

Specific Issues

2019 Election

[28] The witnesses were referred to a document that lists briefings the PM received in relation to allegations of FI in the Don Valley North riding during the nomination campaign. One bullet states that the PM received a briefing in late September / early October 2019, which is not reflected in the PCO IR. Mr. MacDonald could not clarify, as he was not at PCO at that time. Mr. Morrison echoed that as FDPA, he had not been informed of these allegations at the time. Mr. Rigby stated that this briefing would have occurred during Ms. Bossenmaier’s tenure.

2021 Election

[29] The witnesses were referred to a **Canadian Security Intelligence Service (“CSIS”)** Intelligence product. This intelligence product details certain allegations of FI related to a situation during the 44th general election. Mr. MacDonald noted that the document was distributed to “Named Recipients Only”, and speculated it may have been sent over the **Canadian Top Secret Network (“CTSN”)**. He confirmed that this document would have likely been delivered to PCO.

[30] Mr. Morrison noted that these allegations were mentioned in information that the SITE TF presented to the **Panel of Five (“P5”)**. He noted that certain designated members of the Liberal Party of Canada were briefed on this by the SITE TF.

[31] Mr. Morrison explained that as acting NSIA, his staff would prepare a binder of daily intelligence for him. He had no recollection of seeing this document, but noted that it was in the materials presented to SITE TF to P5, so he would have been made aware of this information.

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- [32] Mr. MacDonald was referred to a document on FI that summarizes the briefing to the designated members of the Liberal Party of Canada. It is dated September 11, 2021. Mr. MacDonald explained that the first two pages were speaking notes prepared by an employee present at the briefing. The second two pages appear to be a debriefing of what had been discussed. Mr. MacDonald, who was present at the briefing, explained that he recalled the briefing, but had never seen the debriefing notes.
- [33] The interviewees were then referred to a document that appears to be a draft of CSIS speaking notes for a briefing to the PM on the same subject. It is dated September 22, 2021. Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Morrison could not recall whether this briefing ever occurred. Mr. Morrison stated it was likely that the PM would have been aware of the related issue. That said, he could not say whether CSIS had briefed the PM specifically on this issue.
- [34] The interviewees were then referred to a specific CSIS report dated June 20, 2023. Mr. MacDonald did not know why CSIS wrote another report on the issue in 2023. Mr. Green could not state with certainty whether he had seen the document, but noted that it was not uncommon for CSIS to circulate a new summary of an issue if they had any updates or new information. Mr. MacDonald noted that he had left PCO a few weeks earlier, on June 4, 2021, to work at TBS. Mr. Morrison explained he had never seen this document.

People's Republic of China FI

- [35] The witnesses were then referred to **CAN005784**, dated February 18, 2020. This is a **CSIS Intelligence Assessment ("IA")**.
- [36] Mr. Rigby did not recall seeing this document. He pointed to an excerpt of the document, which states the findings within the IA are "initial", and the result of an "early, ongoing investigation". He suspected that if he read this document, this language may have dissuaded him from bringing this IA directly to the PM. However, he noted the intelligence contained therein was reflected in a **Daily Foreign Intelligence Brief ("DFIB")** on February 21, 2020.

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- [37] Mr. Green confirmed that the intelligence contained in that DFIB did not go into the **PM's Weekly Intelligence Brief ("PMWIB")**. PMWIBs are given to the **Prime Minister's Office ("PMO")**.
- [38] Mr. Morrison flagged p. 2, footnote 2, of the IA. He shared his view that CSIS could be more judicious in its language, but also acknowledged that the report is written for the S&I community and not for public consumption. He expressed that this language would have caused him to monitor this issue, but did not require immediate action.
- [39] Mr. Green stated that there is "grey area" between foreign interference and legitimate diplomatic activities, and much of the behaviour discussed in the IA was normal political activity.