

UNCLASSIFIED



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

Addendum to Interview Summary: Minister Marco Mendicino Interview Summary

Marco Mendicino was interviewed by Commission Counsel on February 23, 2024. The interview was held in a secure environment and included references to classified information. This addendum contains information provided during that interview that is relevant to Stage 2 of the Commission's proceedings and 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.

Notes to Reader:

- Commission Counsel have provided explanatory notes in square brackets to assist the reader.

1. Information Flow

- [1] Mr. Mendicino noted that not all intelligence reporting would come to him as Minister, but that in the case of CSIS warrants and *Investment Canada Act* national security reviews, and certain briefings notes would be delivered to him in accordance with the applicable legislation.
- [2] Generally, any matter that required a ministerial decision would be brought directly to Minister Mendicino's attention. In these circumstances, his office and/or the Public Safety department would prepare a covering note that summarized the materials contained in the package of documents he received. He explained that he would typically receive an oral briefing, review the documents and would go back to ask further questions if necessary. He would ask these questions directly to the relevant individuals in a secure facility, typically to the Director of CSIS or a designate. During this discussion, Mr. Mendicino highlighted that he took applications for warrants very

UNCLASSIFIED

seriously. He explained that he would often approve warrants expeditiously, and would set conditions when necessary. For example, he would add an obligation to be briefed on the results of certain high-risk warrants.

- [3] Mr. Mendicino underscored that he adopted a practice of asking: “What do you want me to do about this” during intelligence briefings. He adopted this practice to ensure appropriate action was considered in response to briefings, but remained sensitive to the need for operational independence of RCMP and CSIS. He emphasized that intelligence agencies must not be co-opted by elected officials for partisan purposes.
- [4] Mr. Mendicino noted that briefings in relation to FI tended to be more *ad-hoc*, as information related to FI was dynamic. As the knowledge base on a FI-related subject of interest grew, briefings would be updated and evolve. Mr. Mendicino explained that most FI-related briefings he received were intended for his situational awareness only, but he still made a point of asking whether any action items were required of him at every briefing.

2. Methods to Combat FI

2.1. Ministerial Directives

- [5] The Ministerial Directive (“**MD**”) on FI that Mr. Mendicino issued in 2023 was discussed. This MD was intended to improve information flow related to FI threats against Parliamentary actors. He explained that an MD is intended to provide clarity from the Minister of PS to portfolio agencies regarding expectations and protocols surrounding specific issues.
- [6] Mr. Mendicino did not issue any other MDs aside from the one he issued in 2023 on the topic of FI. He stated that he would have relied on MDs issued by his predecessor, Bill Blair, in relation to the previously set Intelligence Priorities.
- [7] Mr. Mendicino was referred to a letter from former Minister of PS Bill Blair to the Commissioner of the RCMP attaching an MD and a letter from former Minister of PS Bill Blair to the Director of CSIS. He could not recall whether he had seen these documents, but he stated they were consistent with his understanding of the intelligence priorities in

UNCLASSIFIED

place when he assumed office. He indicated he would have been briefed on the general nature of these MDs. In particular, he noted, FI was at or near the top of the list of priorities, which was consistent with his understanding that FI was a top priority when he assumed office.

- [8] Mr. Mendicino spoke of the use of CSIS warrants to reduce threats to national security and how he was involved in the approval process as Minister.
- [9] Mr. Mendicino was referred to a warrant. Mr. Mendicino indicated that he signed this warrant.

2.2. CSIS Toolkit

- [10] When asked about CSIS' toolkit to respond to FI, Mr. Mendicino noted that aside from investigating threats to national security and reporting and advising the Government of Canada on those threats, CSIS also has a policy role to play. Specifically, CSIS is best-placed to alert him to gaps in legislation that, in its opinion, may hinder its work. CSIS also keeps Canadians informed via public reporting, liaises with international partners, generates reporting, briefs this reporting up to senior officials, and undertakes a range of operational activities in Canada and abroad.

2.3. Threat Reduction Measures

- [11] Mr. Mendicino also discussed threat reduction measures (“**TRMs**”) as a method to target FI. He explained that during his time in office, TRMs were a relatively new power and CSIS was still trying to determine how to best deploy them. He recalled approving one TRM involving the targeting of Parliamentarians by China. He noted that the detailed annotations on a classified document relating to the TRM were his own, and explained that because of the sensitive nature of the information to be briefed, the risks inherent in the TRM, as well as legislative constraints about what could be shared, he reviewed the TRM carefully before authorizing it.
- [12] Mr. Mendicino was referred to a classified document summarizing a TRM that CSIS intended to undertake. Mr. Mendicino stated that he did not recall this particular TRM

UNCLASSIFIED

being formally submitted to him for approval, but noted that not all TRMs required his approval.