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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 fédéraux

Public Summary of the Classified Interview of: Global Affairs Canada (Marta Morgan, Cindy Termorshuizen, Philippe Lafortune, Tara Denham, Gallit Dobner)

On February 9, 2024, Commission counsel interviewed former and current senior officials from **Global Affairs Canada ("GAC")** in a panel format. 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:

- Commission Counsel have provided explanatory notes in square brackets to assist the reader.
- This summary has been produced in reliance on 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. Any 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 with the unclassified Institutional Report prepared by GAC and the unclassified summary of the interview of Martin Benjamin.

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Background

Marta Morgan held the position of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs from May 2019 until October 2022. She was also a member of the 2019 and 2021 Panels of Five. At the time of the interview, she was retired.

Cindy Termorshuizen is the Associate Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. She has been in this role since January 2022.

Philippe Lafortune is the Director General, Intelligence and Chief Intelligence Officer of the Intelligence Bureau. He has been in this role since September 2022. His predecessor, Martin Benjamin, who held the position from 2019 to September 2022, was interviewed separately.

Tara Denham has been the Director General of the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion since September 2022. From May 2016 until August 2019, she was the Director of the Centre for International Digital Policy, which houses the **G7 Rapid Response Mechanism ("G7 RRM")** Canada team and serves as a secretariat for the G7 RRM.

Gallit Dobner was the Director of the Centre for International Digital Policy, which houses the G7 RRM Canada team and serves as a secretariat for the G7 RRM, from August 2019 until August 2022. She also served as a representative of GAC on the **Security and Intelligence Threat to Elections Task Force ("SITE TF")** during this period.

GAC's Key Executive Positions

For an overview of the interviewees' respective positions and duties, the reader should consult the organizational chart of GAC's key executive positions, which is found at page 7 of the GAC Institutional Report.

GAC's Role within the Security and Intelligence Community

Mr. Lafortune stated that GAC is not a collector of intelligence. However, GAC assesses intelligence, with a particular focus on foreign intelligence. He characterised GAC as one of the largest consumers of intelligence within the Government. This intelligence is

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primarily used to support foreign policy development and to ensure that the department is fulfilling its duty of care towards staff at Canada's missions abroad. The Intelligence Bureau achieves these objectives by receiving, assessing and disseminating relevant intelligence, and by developing based-threat assessments.

Mr. Lafortune added that the Intelligence Bureau has other roles. It coordinates all interactions with the intelligence review bodies, it ensures that GAC has the ability to operate in a top secret environment, even abroad, and it disseminates intelligence products across the Department. GAC is equipped with limited secure spaces (SCIFs) where sensitive intelligence can be accessed. The **Client Relation Officers ("CROs")** within GAC are responsible for the dissemination of sensitive intelligence products.

Flow of Information

Mr. Lafortune explained that the internal dissemination of intelligence products is made to clients with clearance within GAC on a "need to know" basis. As the Chief Indoctrinating Officer, he has the highest level of security clearance. If he determines that a senior official without the proper security clearance needs to see a specific or critical piece of intelligence, he will take the necessary steps to ensure that indoctrination takes place and the intelligence can be properly shared with this official.

Mr. Lafortune identified three means through which the Bureau provides intelligence products to senior GAC officials.

First, the CROs are responsible for delivering intelligence products to internal clients. Mr. Lafortune uses the CROs when he wants to make sure that a particular client sees a critical piece of intelligence in a timely fashion. Mr. Lafortune added that there is a direct relationship between the Intelligence Bureau and the Minister's office, so the Minister or her staff is able to see any critical piece of intelligence that circumstances require. Ms. Morgan added that she did not determine that the Minister needed to see a certain intelligence product, but could confirm that it had been provided to her if necessary. Mr. Lafortune was responsible for the routine dissemination of intelligence within GAC.

Second, every week, GAC's Intelligence Bureau prepares "binders" for decision makers, which include raw and assessed intelligence. The Minister's office and the Deputy

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Minister receive the same binders. The Minister's office may request further context or a meeting with subject matter experts on behalf of the Minister.

Third, GAC's Intelligence Bureau provides in person briefings to senior officials on intelligence in a secure environment. These briefings can be provided proactively by the Intelligence Bureau or requested by senior officials. Mr. Lafortune also explained that the ministers and/or their respective offices receive weekly briefings on a wide range of issues from the Intelligence Bureau.

Mr. Lafortune explained that GAC receives a large volume of raw intelligence every week. In terms of who decides which client must see which intelligence product and when, Mr. Lafortune explained that most of the time, the Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) for disseminating the intelligence is to identify the officials/team within GAC that have both proper clearances and roles & responsibilities relating to the issues covered in the intelligence reports. In the event that the intelligence is either time-sensitive or substantially sensitive, the decision to "push the intel" by flagging it and ensuring it has the right profile in reading package becomes critical and therefore done on an ad hoc basis.

Senior officials are not briefed on or exposed to every single piece of raw intelligence the Bureau receives due to the large amount of products received on a daily basis, but rather are exposed to assessments based on all those raw intelligence products. Mr. Lafortune explained that generally an intelligence product should be deemed credible and corroborated to be considered actionable by GAC. For more critical and topical issues, relevant raw intelligence pieces are provided by the Intelligence Bureau to senior officials in addition to the assessments.

Finally, there is a distinction between the dissemination of intelligence and ensuring that intelligence is read. When Mr. Lafortune considers something critical, he puts it in the briefing binders, flags it and sends it to the relevant people with a CRO to ensure receipt.

Ms. Morgan concurred with Mr. Lafortune's description of the flow of information within the Department, with weekly binders of intelligence assessments on a variety of subjects as well as oral briefings. She added that on a specific critical incident, the flow of information would increase, meaning she would receive 'real time'/daily intelligence, as

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occurred after Iran shot down a Ukrainian plane with many Canadian citizens and permanent residents onboard. She added that in her capacity as a member of the Panel of Five, during the 43rd and 44th general elections, she received specific election-related intelligence products, both raw and assessed, before each Panel of Five meeting. This was a separate stream of intelligence from the one related to her "regular" role within GAC.

Foreign interference

Normal diplomatic activity versus foreign interference

Asked to distinguish between normal diplomatic activity and foreign interference, Ms. Morgan explained that legitimate foreign influence consists of what a diplomat would normally do, meaning overtly encouraging host governments to take actions in a certain way. The overt means through which this can be accomplished may include putting significant public pressure on host governments, building relationships with businesses or elected officials of host governments, attending meetings or dinners, financing human rights organizations, etc. She agreed with the proposition that "this is not always a polite sport", but stated that it can be played as long as it is conducted in an open and transparent way.

Ms. Morgan explained that foreign influence becomes foreign interference when the activity is conducted against the interests of Canada in a covert, non-transparent and malign manner, when proxies are involved, when financial inducements are made, or when threats are used.

G7 RRM / RRM Canada

Ms. Denham explained that the G7 RRM was established by G7 Leaders at the 2018 Charlevoix summit. The main reason for mobilization was the social media disinformation, following the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election and Brexit. The RRM's main goal was to address the growing threat of disinformation by identifying patterns, behaviours and indicators through open-source data analytics.

Ms. Dobner explained that the G7 RRM is coordinated by GAC through the RRM Canada Secretariat. RRM Canada has the capacity to monitor and assess the digital information

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environment. The Director of the Center for International Digital Policy, which houses the RRM Canada Secretariat, also sits on the SITE TF. In this context, the RRM works as an early warning system.

Ms. Dobner explained that RRM Canada holds monthly meetings (the "RRM Canada table") with the S&I community and other departments (Heritage Canada, FINTRAC, etc.) to share relevant information. Ms. Denham explained that the intelligence GAC receives from other agencies does not shape or alter how RRM Canada analysts approach their task as most of them do not have the necessary clearance. The intelligence may be useful to adapt the RRM Canada investigative strategies.

Ms. Dobner further explained that RRM Canada findings can be shared broadly, including with G7 members, because they monitor open-source material. When the issue is one of global concern (for example, the COVID-19 Pandemic), it may be shared broadly. If the information is partner-specific, the sharing of information may be more targeted (for example, the German Minister of Foreign Affairs being targeted by a disinformation campaign). Ms. Denham added that partners are more interested in the tactics being used than the content of the disinformation shared itself (i.e., the narrative).

Ms. Denham explained that RRM Canada did not look at Chinese social media in 2019 as the team lacked the necessary linguistic capability. This changed in 2021 once RRM Canada had Chinese language capability. As with all social media platforms, RRM can only access the public information available on WeChat. RRM Canada did not look at reporting gathered on private chats and provided by the Conservative Party, Kenny Chiu and Erin O'Toole, because of privacy considerations.

Cyber Attribution framework

Ms. Denham explained that the **cyber attribution framework ("CAF")**, which began in 2019, is distinct from the RRM, who monitors the digital environment. The GAC-led cyber attribution framework may only be considered should an incident be cyber-related (i.e., if it targets infrastructure), not digital threats (i.e., disinformation).

Ms. Denham explained that the CAF is triggered when there is a cyber incident that may be linked to a foreign entity. Allies can also request Canada to join an attribution which may also trigger the CAF. There are four steps after the CAF is initiated:

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1. CSE leads a technical assessment (what happened? What do we know? In other words, the forensic on the event);
2. GAC leads an international legal assessment;
3. GAC leads a foreign policy assessment; and
4. Public Safety Canada leads a domestic assessment.

In the end, GAC reviews all the relevant assessments and puts together recommendations for response which could include Canadian participation in a public attribution with allies or Canada privately demarching the offending government. Ms. Denham said that there had only been 9 public attributions since 2019, but that the CAF was invoked more than 9 times. Not all of the invocations of the CAF were related to Canadian incidents. None of the 9 public attributions related to election infrastructure incidents.

In focus: 43rd and 44th General Elections

Ms. Morgan explained that social media disinformation was the primary concern heading into the 2019 general election. Following incidents around the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election and Brexit, the Government of Canada has been working to strengthen itself to counter this new threat. This work culminated in the development of a Plan to Protect Canada's Democracy and the creation of the GAC-led RRM in 2018 at the G7. Ms. Morgan stated that while foreign interference was still an area of concern going into the 2021 general election, the baseline threat level was relatively consistent with the one that existed in 2019. For instance, Russia's attention was directed elsewhere than at Canada's elections in 2019 and 2021. At first China was not very effective at online interference, but it has significantly increased its capabilities between 2019 and 2021.

Ms. Morgan further explained that during the 43rd and 44th general elections, the relations between China and Canada were tense. For instance, the two Michaels were detained, and individuals were sanctioned by China in light of Canada's Parliament resolution on Uyghurs. Therefore, GAC had to address various threats while continuing to engage with China.

UNCLASSIFIED**The PRC Foreign Interference**

Ms. Morgan was briefed on intelligence that was collected about Chinese diplomatic staff within Canada. She was aware that the PRC was involved in foreign interference and that the threat activity was being closely monitored by the S&I Community.

When specifically asked about whether or not diplomatic measures against Chinese officials were considered in relation to the 2019 and 2021 elections, Ms. Morgan explained that the threshold to consider potential diplomatic measures was not reached. During the writ periods, GAC did not consider diplomatic measures as none of the intelligence triggered specific concerns. She added that the Panel was very mindful of its mandate and was aware of the existing departmental mandates. GAC might have helped CSIS in exercising its authority to implement **threat reduction measures ("TRM")** by conducting a foreign policy risk assessment.

When asked if GAC had concluded that PRC officials were engaged in foreign interference, Ms. Morgan answered that it is globally known that foreign interference is objective commonly-used tool of the PRC. The activity is performed on a spectrum and it is therefore hard to attribute a specific event to a particular individual. When asked if any attempts were made by GAC to discourage this behaviour, she answered that CSIS was best placed to act as this type of actions fell within CSIS's mandate, not GAC's. Ms. Morgan could not remember suggesting to CSIS that a TRM should be implemented to mitigate Chinese FI activity. She added that it is important to respect the role of each agency in the S&I community. Ms. Morgan does not recall any undertaking by GAC directed at consular officials during the elections, but said it did occur after 2021. Before the writ periods in 2019 and 2021, GAC sent a notice to foreign missions in Canada reminding foreign diplomatic staff of their duties in light of the Vienna Convention¹.

Indian Foreign Interference

Ms. Morgan explained that the intelligence on India's foreign interference activities is general. No specific intelligence about Indian foreign interference came to her attention during the 43rd and 44th general elections.

¹ Ms. Morgan referred Commission Counsel to paragraph. 15-16 of GAC Institutional Report (unclassified).

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Foreign State Foreign Interference

Ms. Morgan did not remember being told that CSIS conducted a TRM related to a specific foreign state's interference in the 2019 election.