

TOP SECRET//CEO//**Critical Election Incident Public Protocol Panel****Meeting Notes – 2021****1. Meeting #1 (July 12, 2021)**

- No record of notes located

TOP SECRET//CEO/ **2. Meeting #2 (July 26, 2021)**

Attendees: Clerk, DM PS, Deputy Clerk, DM GAC, DM MOG, A/SEC S&I, A/SEC DI

i. Opening Remarks**ii. CSIS Brief on Public Report**

- Emphasized the necessity of public awareness in countering foreign interference.
- Highlighted that the range of Canadians, people, and communities affected by foreign interference is increasing.
- Stated that foreign interference is increasing and that foreign governments are using it to advance their foreign policy agendas.
- Because of this, Canada's endgame must be resilience and transparency and bring sunlight to these issues.

iii. CSE Brief on Public Report

- This is the third report.
- Data collection to support the reports development began in October 2020.
- Highlighted that activities from 2017 to now have been relatively stable.
- Russia, China, and Iran are the primary actors world-wide.
- Voters, political parties, election infrastructure all are potential targets, however, from 2015-2018 voters were the primary target.
- Canada is a lower priority target for most state actors.
- Nonetheless, stated that Canadians will encounter some form of cyber interference before and during the next election.

iv. Political Party Brief-Out (A/SEC DI / A/SEC S&I / DM MOG)

- Provided an overview of Canada Declaration work that highlighted how it is a voluntary arrangement, a public commitment that holds Social-Media platforms and Government to Account, and includes Google, Microsoft and Facebook.

v. Exercise Scenarios Discussed which generated questions and observations

- Can SITE go public on issues observed?
- How does information flow around the ecosystem?
- How does the Panel ask a Social Media company a question about an issue?
- Threshold – its about legitimacy of the election – that is the bar for decision making.

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3. Meeting #3 (August 23, 2021) (Note: Writ Dropped August 15, 2021)

Attendees: P5 Plus Deputy Clerk, A/SEC S&I, A/SEC DI, SITE

i. Opening Remarks

- A/NSIA Morrison, A/SEC S&I MacDonald, and A/SEC DI Sutherland delivered opening remarks and updates.
- Facebook work / paper was discussed which highlighted issues such as engaging candidates on cyber security, disinformation algorithms and identifying IMVE efforts.
- CSE Chief Bruce provided multiple updates on their support to Elections Canada’s activities.

ii. Threat Update (SITE & CSIS)

CSIS

- CSIS Director Vigneault briefed the Panel on two cases. [redacted]
- [redacted]
- CSIS Director Vigneault provided an overview of activities in the lead up to the election which included meeting with 15 MPs to talk about foreign interference.
- The Director also indicated that Threat Reduction Measures (TRMs) were undertaken lately [redacted] including interviewing and talking to MPs. [redacted]

CSE

- CSE Chief Bruce briefed [redacted]
- CSE Chief Bruce [redacted]

GAC RRM

- GAC RRM Principal indicated they were monitoring the ecosystem (host of platforms) and were not seeing any indications for foreign interference since the writ dropped.
- Highlighted that most media is focused on Afghanistan now; issues involving Canada being reported on, but not specifically mentioning the election.
- RRM outlined their alert scale for reporting which is based on: Source, Behaviour, Content, Scale, Targets, Hybridity
- The role of G7 RRM was clarified and conveyed that the G7 group does not compare each others’ elections or specific issues, but rather shares threat findings and behaviors.

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- The Deputy Clerk requested regular updates to the Panel last meeting.

iii. Retreat Scenario Exercise: Lessons Learned

- Questions were raised by Panel members including:
 - “What would it really take to get to a threshold?”
 - “If we don’t act early, things could get worse”
 - “Where have the standards of tolerance shifted to” (in response to threatening behavior at campaign events).

iv. Scenario Exercise

- A scenario generated discussion of the appropriateness of engaging a Minister – to inform or discuss?

v. Discussion of Panel Announcement Process

- Deferred to next meeting.

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4. Meeting #4 (August 30, 2021)

Attendees: Panel, Deputy Clerk, DM MOG, A/SEC S&I, A/SEC DI, SITE

i. Introduction (Clerk)

- Experience and preparation by the Panel and S&I Community over the past months are serving us well so far.
- Elections Canada is actively monitoring social media daily. I understand leading topics included mail-in voting, machine voting, pandemic restrictions, and voting on campus. These observations are consistent with RRM.
- It was noted that the P5 would like a running count of how many mail-in ballots are being requested.
- Political Party representatives are engaged in the process and expressed positive feedback. The next classified briefing is this Thursday, September 2. The final meeting before the election will be held September 15.
- RCMP call on MinSec
- The next panel meeting is on September 8, a Wednesday.

ii. SITE Update

- CSIS Director – nothing close to the threshold thus far.
- CSIS Director – IMVE threat assessment, COVID and anti-vax is the glue that gets people together. Could see QAnon redirect coming up.
- CSE Chief – Closely following known FI targets. []
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- Cyber Centre following some un-authorized log-in attempts at EC web-site.
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- RCMP - FI & Misinformation / Disinformation – what is new and troubling is this trend of gathering protestors of all kinds and their impacts or propensity to violence in or around an election
- What is our advice to the PM on all of this?
- Overall sense there are some changing tactics. There are multi-jurisdiction efforts under way including police of jurisdiction and RCMP.
- There was discussion about how to avoid escalation and consider what more could be done?
- Discussion of how robust and nimble the TA's are. Recognition there needs to be robust tracking of facts / understanding (e.g. # of events, purpose, actors, locations).
- RCMP [] & Lisa Ducharm) – Have TA on PM at medium. Overall TC on Elections is at Low.
- RRM – nothing outside of what the daily reporting is saying

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- There was a suggestion there should be reach-out regarding secure of mail-in ballots with Canada Post – DI to action.

iii. Scenarios & Key discussion Points

- Should a Minister be informed before Panel goes public or an Ops Agency?
- Francois – check in with PCO Legal on what CISS can do when CSIS, CSE, RRM are going public on an issue.

iv. Announcements Process

- Would it be a news-release or in-person? Who? Clerk plus 1 or 2. Plus backgrounder / tech briefing?
- EC would also need to do something
- Briefings would be required to Parties and PM.
- There will be questions about how much is releasable?
- Would Ops agency do news release or media?
- There would also be aspects of communicating the threshold and why this is above.
- Only tool is to correct the record.

v. Close

- It was agreed the next meeting would be September 7.

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5. Meeting #5 (September 7, 2021)

Attendees: Panel, Deputy Clerk, DM MOG, A/SEC S&I, A/SEC DI, SITE

i. Opening Remarks

ii. Threat Update – SITE

- CSIS Director Vigneault [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- The Director also provided an update [redacted] and indicated overall the Panel threshold was nowhere close to being met. [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- The Clerk requested the Director return with advice and updates on these issues.
- CSE updated [redacted]
[redacted]
Monitoring will continue.
- GAC RRM Principal updated on monitoring activities and indicated scope is wide-reaching and includes the comment section on social media platforms (as does Elections Canada’s monitoring).
- RRM is chasing a WeChat issue which includes apparent support for a Vancouver East candidate, although it is quiet now.
- RCMP Principal provided an update on their monitoring of threats to candidates and at campaign events. They indicated there were no known Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremist (IMVE) threats at this time.
- The RCMP also indicated they were seeing different techniques by protestors focused on LPC activities. Highlighted concerns about the potential for protestors and supporters to clash.

TOP SECRET//CEO/ *iii. Panel Discussion – Announcement Process**iv. Scenario Exercise*

- The following questions and key takeaways were highlighted by Panel members when discussing the scenarios:
 - How could the ecosystem debunk an issues if it is false and by whom?
 - Some things should just never be allowed, irrespective of the issue of threshold
 - Foreign generated foreign interference are more straight forward, but we need to take a look a t the behavioral aspects of domestic actions or actors
 - A lack of action is also a decision
 - The riding by riding issues are one of the most difficult aspects of this.
 - Announcement-related issues may be easier for domestic issues. What can/should be said after the Election is over?
 - Recognition it may also take time to determine if something is domestic or foreign. Amplification take time to mount and put into play so it has affect, motive is not always clear.
 - Ideas like the Panel providing a “green light” news release prior to September 20 were discussed as ideas.

TOP SECRET//CEO **6. Meeting #6 (September 15, 2021)**

Attendees: Panel, Deputy Clerk, DM MOG, A/SEC S&I, A/SEC DI, SITE

i. Opening Remarks

- A/SEC DI Sutherland updated that he had a call with Chan on Facebooks efforts during the election.
- A/SEC S&I MacDonald updated on coordination with Elections Canada including sharing their concerns about potential violence at advance polls (in context of backlash to COVID health measures).
- The final meeting with cleared party representatives was also held this morning which included the current threat landscape (SITE) and retrospective of the election period. Reps shared their appreciation and valued the briefings.

ii. Threat Update – SITE

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- CSE provided an overview of a placemat and briefed on its lines of effort to help secure electoral operations and democratic processes: Debates; Canada post; Elections Canada advance polls.
- CSE also provide an overview that was recently completed.
- RRM updated on recent Chinese media reporting and campaign that looks to influence Canadian-Chinese individuals to not vote for CPC candidates (Observed activity September 9-12). Use of social media also observed.
- RRM indicated it would not link coordination of these activities to state actors at this time nor conclude that amplification is deliberate and nefarious.
- Signs of some Canadian civil society repeating this issue.
- RRM also highlighted the recent German attribution of Russian interference in their election.
- RCMP provided an overview of monitoring activities as well as an update on its protective policing posture. Threats and protection for the PM had increased, with noted vandalism and harassment of personnel.
- Protest monitoring showing anti-lockdown, masking, anti-vaccine sentiment. There have been signs advocating moving to violence and cross-over protesters.
- Online monitoring is continuing and watching a “world-wide” protest event scheduled for Parliament Hill this Saturday.

TOP SECRET//CEO *iii. Panel Discussion*

- Panel members discussed the threat environment.
- The University of Ottawa group saying there is foreign interference was also discussed.
- Panel members also discussed the book on the PM and the need to make inquiries to see what the story was. The question of FI would be posed to CSIS.

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7. Meeting #7 (September 23, 2021) (Note: Election Day was September 20, 2021)

Attendees: Panel, Deputy Clerk, DM MOG, A/SEC S&I, A/SEC DI, SITE

i. Opening Remarks

- A/SEC DI Sutherland provided an update on the election: 167 riding electoral contest were final; 6 ridings still too close to call.
- A/SEC D&I McDonald updated on issues of interest which included [redacted] MND request for a brief foreign interference and the EPOC visit.

ii. Threat Update – SITE

- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- An overview of observed activity by other threat actors was provided which found: [redacted] no activity to note that made a CSIS Act 2.c threshold [redacted]
- CSE briefed that they observed no change in the level of threat activity over the last week. [redacted]
- Cyber – An Elections Canada outage required Cyber Centre support, however, it was a technical issue and not threat related.
- SITE will stay 24/7 on call to the end of the week and has begun work on its 2021 After Action Report.
- RCMP briefed they saw no organized FI or IMVE campaigns.
- RCMP is starting their After Action Report which will cover issues related to Protected Persons, Campaign and public order events, and COVID protests.
- GAC RRM Principal updated that there were no major indicators over the past week. Election day plus 1 was very quiet.
- Observed the Chinese State and Party social media was quiet and stopped by September 18, 2021.
- Canadian media reported more on China and suspected foreign interference leading up to Election Day.
- Russia was very quiet as they had an election at the same time.
- RRM indicated that overall, they did not see a major or sustained campaign by any State actor.

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- What was observed: Grey Zone activities, which may have been organic and/or organized by a state, the blending of domestic and international in the online ecosystem. Saw overt and covert (encrypted) social media activity.
- The Panel raised the following in response: S&I Community needs to come to ground on these issues (threshold and grey zone challenges); The blending is importance and should be on a future agenda (need frameworks); Sought clarity as to what the online issues would look like if it was more clear cut.

iii. Panel Discussion

- What is the follow-up on the 3 cases briefed to the Panel?
- After Action Reports and where we go from here?
 - A/SEC DI Sutherland – Need to get a list of candidates for CEIPP independent review in place quickly and will bring ideas to next meeting.
 - A/SEC S&I: ADM ESCC could be leveraged to push work ahead when ready.
 - Clerk: Report needs to be integrated and comprehensive.
- Panel Members also highlighted the following when considering how best to take work forward:
 - Clerk: How do we equip a new Government and Cabinet to protect themselves?; Need to clearly and consistently differentiate and understand FI vs. influence.
 - Deputy Clerk: Independent review of 2019 CEIPP (Judd) did not get an evaluation of our post election evolution and efforts. Something to consider.
 - A/NSIA: Big take away is division in Canadian society. We may have dodged a bullet in terms of organized FI. The Grey Zone issue is a difficult one to solve. Lexicon to help understand?
 - DM PS: We have a HASA strategy; what about some of the [redacted] reporting?
 - DM JUS: On FI, the Panel would only reveal FI when it is really bad and easy to catch. We need to perfect this.
- Clerk: Next Panel meeting should be scheduled after swearing in. Request to include an assessment and what the CPC call was about.

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8. Meeting #8 (December 10, 2021)

Attendees: Panel, DM MOG, A/SEC S&I, A/SEC DI, SITE

i. Opening Remarks

ii. Threat Update

CSIS

- CSIS Director Vigneault indicated that the PRC sought to clandestinely/covertly influence the election and [redacted]
- CSIS Director Vigneault indicated that SITE had seen "grey zone" activities and that these were direct but not covert, [redacted]
- CSIS Director Vigneault reported that CSIS did not see IMVE threaten the election and that [redacted]

RCMP

- Mike Duheme noted that CACP connectivity was important.

GAC

- Gallit Dobner briefed on the RRM deep dive:
 - The exercise did not result in findings,
 - There was coordination between media actors, but Chinese state media separated itself.
 - Questions resulted on whether social media outlets took their cues from state actors or proxy actors.
 - DFI Labs and McDonald Laurier Institute completed a deep dive: "we saw what we saw".
 - U of T report will be coming out soon. It looked at polling data and found there was no impact; McGill University survey shows that almost ¼ of Canadians felt China interfered in the election
- Temporal question on what we knew, and clandestine behaviours
- Question on communications during the writ period, and the SITE recommendation about communicating

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iii. **Key Takeaways Deck / Grey Zones Deck**

- The following comments, questions and key takeaways were highlighted by Panel members when discussing the Decks:
 - DM Stewart:
 - Panel was organized and RRM was helpful
 - We never really started out with a baseline of going public
 - The question is what is covert and what is clandestine?
 - Need to find, and interdict FI; need a mechanism outside the election (eg, HASA, Foreign Agents Registry)
 - GAC demarche was ineffective
 - Tools are inadequate; transparency is not robust
 - CSE's work on [REDACTED] is a good model for FI [REDACTED]
 - Unknown how to address non-violent IMVE
 - DM Daigle:
 - Proposed that we look at CPC reaction, and the challenge with defining the threshold; we don't know when to react and how to explain the situation to Canadians
 - Hard to know what is protection and what is freedom of speech: where to draw the line?
 - Should Panel amend the TORs?
 - David Morrison :
 - "it" didn't happen: did we get lucky?
 - We had a clean election; there was some stuff though
 - Should "we" have said something at the end of the election?
 - There is a difference between online activity and regular FI [REDACTED]
 - The big picture is foreign Influence in an election
 - Online... will emerge as a bigger problem in the future
 - The online activity we have to live with: the internet has no borders; could online activity swing an election
 - Given we didn't see anything, should we have said something?
 - Clerks:
 - We are still wrestling with what we found out after the election; what would we do if we found out during the transition?



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- What do we do about transition and foreign influence?
 - We need to parse out much more the issue of influence
 - We need to address FI much more outside of an election
 - Campaign trail bleeds into Min Sec
 - The credibility of the Panel and Protocol is at risk because of the CPC issue.
 - What do we need to do with the CPC issue before closing out our work?
- DM Daigle:
 - It is not clear to Canadians what we do
 - Should the Panel produce a report?
 - We didn't spend any time on the impact to the credibility of the election as part of our mandate
 - We do not have real metrics on impacts
 - Director Vigneault:
 - We need to make/sensitize Canadians that it's a rough world out there
 - Panel needs an additional step
 - Clerk:
 - Intelligence organizations need to stop confusing "influence" and "interference"
 - Maybe we do need to continue the conversation with the political parties