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October 29, 2019 – Security Brief for Minister Gould**1. Elections Apparatus Summary:***Panel*

- Panel of Five met weekly during the writ period and actively monitored threats to the election.
- The Panel did not observe any activities that met the threshold for a public announcement or affected Canada's ability to have a free and fair election (assessment supported by regular intel briefings and monitoring by SITE).
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- This assessment is ongoing by the security and intelligence agencies with some preliminary findings already concluded.
- An "assessment" of the Critical Election Incident Public Protocol (the Protocol) will be conducted in the coming months.

Political Parties

- In accordance with the Protocol, cleared members of the political parties also received routine threat updates. We received positive feedback by the parties on this experience, most notably from the CPC.
- As the writ period is over, these briefings have concluded.

Security and Intelligence Threats to the Election (SITE) Task Force

- SITE will continue to meet and analyze their reporting with a view to producing a consolidated assessment of their findings.
- SITE will also provide lessons learned and recommendations, including whether they or a similar structure should persist to examine threats to democracy more broadly and whether similar structures should be set up for other special events and investigations.

Elections Security Steering Committees (ESSC)

- DG, ADM and DM ESSC meetings (Co-chaired by Elections Canada and PCO S&I and attended by PCO DI, PCO Comms, SITE members, Public Safety and the CSE Cyber Centre) will continue to meet post-election.
- The main objectives will be to: a) present the consolidated SITE assessment; b) conduct a community "hotwash"; and c) ensure coordination regarding all the post-election reporting requirements.

1/5

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Social Media Platform Engagement:

- [redacted] SITE operational relationships with social media companies [redacted]
[redacted]
- These engagements included meetings, briefings and exchanges of information on both sides. [redacted]
[redacted]
- This engagement is expected to continue and has established the foundation for ongoing, productive relationships moving forward.

CCCS Hotline Service:

- All ministers are signed up to the service and all political parties received guidance from CCCS.
- Between Sept 11 and Oct 21, CCCS received one call from a Minister's office (fake Instagram account) and five calls from political parties ([redacted])
[redacted]

2. Threat Reduction Measures (TRMs):

- [redacted] some potential foreign interference was identified and addressed through [redacted] threat reduction measures and/or monitoring [redacted]
[redacted]
- Pakistan [redacted]

the redacted information relates to TRM measures taken against the foreign interference threat posed by the GoP

- Of note, on two occasions (pre-writ and during the writ), GAC sent a notification to all foreign missions in Ottawa of the pending election, reminding them of the obligation that foreign actors not interfere in the election.

3. General Threat Overview:

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- In mid 2019, CSIS briefed you on their baseline assessment that speaks to what they believed the threat landscape would look like as we moved closer to the election. As a reminder, the assessment points were as follows:
 - Current threat landscape in Canada is consistent with past practice from threat actors: [REDACTED]
 - Cyber threat activity has been directed against other Western elections. [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - Use of social media platforms by foreign state actors to conduct disinformation and amplification activity has increased globally. This trend is likely to be a factor in the Canadian electoral context. [REDACTED]
- Now that the election is over, in re-evaluating the above points, CSIS assess that they remained valid for the duration of the writ period. They continually re-evaluated the above positions as new intelligence came in but nothing substantive occurred to shift this assessment.
- Prior to the election, in their 2019 Threats to Canadian Democracy, CSE stated:
 - Foreign cyber interference targeting voters has become the common type of cyber threat activity against democratic processes worldwide where cyber threat actors manipulate online information, often using cyber tools, in order to influence voters' opinions and behaviours. CSE judged it very likely that Canadian voters would encounter some form of cyber interference related to the 2019 federal election, though not to the scale of the 2016 US Presidential elections.
- This type of activity was not able to be substantiated during the electoral campaign (see RRM/social media summary).

China threat update:

- [REDACTED] China remained interested in supporting candidates and individuals who it perceived would benefit China's overall strategic interests.
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] limited specific incidents suggestive of FI which were briefed to relevant clients (GC and political parties) during the writ period (e.g., Don Valley).
- [REDACTED]

3/5

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Russia, Pakistan, India, [] threat update:

- []

4. Overall Social Media Assessment:

- Over the course of the elections, RRM Canada analyzed online content for indicators of foreign coordinated and inauthentic activity, including the amplification of potential wedge issues in Canada.
- Overall, RRM Canada did not identify evidence to suggest that foreign activity in any way compromised the integrity of the election.
- Differentiating between foreign and domestic disinformation campaigns is an increasing challenge, including because domestic actors are using disinformation tactics traditionally associated with foreign actors and the tactics of foreign actors are constantly evolving.
- Two examples of higher profile cases the RRM Canada looked into include:

#TrudeauMustGo Hashtag:

- A Canadian Professor published research indicating that the a number of active users of the hashtag #TrudeauMustGo had the acronym "MAGA" in their profiles – for "Make America Great Again, the slogan of Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. The professor suggested this could be either right-wing activists banding together across the border or it could be a "malicious agency working for a client to promote a certain message".
 - RRM Canada assessed the bulk of the activity was domestic in origin and found no indication of foreign amplification or links, judging it is likely a result of cross-border activism and not a foreign campaign. Key non-government partners shared these findings.

Buffalo Chronicle Articles:

- The Buffalo Chronicle published a number of articles targeting PM Trudeau. The Toronto Star and BuzzFeed News published an investigative piece on the Buffalo Chronicle itself, claiming the owner has accepted payments in the past to publish negative articles about clients' political opponents.
- Avaaz, which is an online social action platform, posted a petition calling for an RCMP investigation into who may have paid the Chronicle's owner to promote disinformation related

4/5

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to Canada's election, which has garnered at least 22,000 signatures. The Avaaz petition states that "these stories have reached an estimated 20 million views and counting".

- RRM Canada assessed this number as greatly exaggerated based on its own open-source analysis but cannot fully quantify engagement at this point. They assessed that the most likely reason for the discrepancy is that the metric being used, 'Reach' -- one commonly used on social media monitoring platforms -- measures the aggregate number of followers that each account that shared the content has rather than the number of users that actually engaged with the content, i.e., shared it, liked it or were aware of it.
 - The RRM also noted that Facebook, the primary platform for the article's amplification, had around 240,000 engagements on all Buffalo Chronicle stories involving Canada between March and October 2019.
 - While the RRM does not have any evidence to suggest the articles compromised the integrity of the election, they will continue research and analysis in the days and weeks ahead to ascertain how Buffalo Chronicle content was disseminated on social media to try to assess whether foreign actors are involved.
- This is good example of work extending into the post-election space.

5/5