

TOP SECRET, [REDACTED] /CANADIAN EYES ONLY

13 SEPTEMBER 2021

SITE TF UPDATE TO P5 – 15 SEPTEMBER 2021

SITE TF UPDATE ON FOREIGN INTERFERENCE THREATS TO CANADIAN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS – 2021

Executive Summary of the Threat Environment

- (S) On balance, the Security Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force (SITE TF) assesses that Canada's electoral systems and processes continue to remain resilient to the current level of foreign interference (FI)
- (TS//CEO) The PRC continues to be focused on influencing and potentially interfering with Canadian democratic processes, having identified Canadian politicians considered anti-PRC, sanctioned a sitting MP, [REDACTED]
- (S//CEO) [REDACTED]
- (S//CEO) While many diplomatic activities are consistent with international practices and influence-based approaches to foreign relations, in some grey-zone areas, the accumulation of influence activities over time can shift into covert efforts that lack transparency. Accordingly such malign efforts will be reported to the GC when such situations are identified.

The Information Environment

(U//FOUO) RRM Canada has observed what may be a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) information operation that aims to discourage voters from voting for the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC).

(U//FOUO) RRM Canada has observed CCP media accounts on Chinese social media platforms WeChat and Douyin (China's equivalent of TikTok) wharving widely a narrative that CPC's election platform suggests Erin O'Toole "almost wants to break diplomatic ties with China".

(U//FOUO) The narrative has now grown in considerable scale:

- (U//FOUO) On September 9-12, a number of popular WeChat news accounts that service Chinese-speaking Canadians actively shared the narrative that O'Toole wants to break off relations with China; they did not credit the Global Times, obscuring the narrative's point of origin.
- (U//FOUO) Some accounts added commentary such as "Chinese-Canadians are scared of the Conservative's platform", and questioned whether "Chinese compatriots should support the Conservatives if they use this rhetoric?".

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- (U//FOUO) Respected state news agency *Xinhua* (China’s equivalent to AP or Reuters, and the highest-ranking state-media organ next to Peoples’ Daily) shared videos on Douyin that read: “according to former policy advisor Jocelyn Coulon, the Conservative policy almost wants to break diplomatic relations with China.”
- (U//FOUO) RRM Canada is unable to determine whether there is coordination between the CCP media that originally promoted the narrative and the popular WeChat news accounts that service Chinese-speaking Canadians that are now amplifying the narrative. WeChat news accounts that service Canadians are all registered to individuals in China. While many of these WeChat news accounts are well-established and recognized Canadian-Chinese news sites, some may have unclear links to CCP media groups.
- (U//FOUO) RRM Canada is also unable to determine whether there was inauthentic activity that boosted user engagement with the narrative as Chinese social media platforms are completely non-transparent.

Threat Actors

People’s Republic of China (PRC) – CSIS Assessment

(TS//CEO) The PRC remains the most significant foreign interference (FI) threat to Canadian interests.

[redacted]

The PRC is highly capable and motivated against Canada, and acts in a sophisticated, pervasive and persistent manner against all levels of Canadian government and civil society.

(TS//CEO) The PRC’s FI efforts cover a spectrum of activities ranging from overt, influence-based diplomatic practices, through to clandestine and deceptive activities grounded in foreign interference.

[redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

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(S//CEO)

[Redacted]

(S//CEO) The PRC's FI efforts cover a spectrum of activities ranging from overt, influence-based diplomatic practices, through to clandestine and deceptive activities grounded in foreign interference.

(S//CEO) The following examples do not formally cross the threshold as acts of foreign interference, though several are developing rapidly and being monitored closely.

Examples of PRC Activities of Concern:

[Redacted]

(TS//CEO)

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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- [redacted]

[redacted] (TS//CEO)

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[redacted]

(TS//CEO)

[redacted]

Russian Federation (RF) – CSIS Assessment

[redacted]

(S//CEO)

[redacted] Russia has focused FI activities on discrediting democratic institutions and processes, with an ultimate goal of destabilizing or delegitimizing democratic states.

[redacted]

(TS)

[redacted]

(TS)

[redacted]

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[redacted] As Canada and the US have an intimately linked media ecosystem, there could be exposure to this activity.

(TS/[redacted]) [redacted]
[redacted]

(TS/[redacted]/CEO) Russian cyber actors remain active, targeting a wide range of global victims through known vulnerabilities in hardware and software. [redacted]
[redacted]

[redacted]
(S//CEO) [redacted]
[redacted]

(TS/[redacted]) [redacted]
[redacted]

[redacted]
(S//CEO) [redacted]
[redacted]

[redacted]
(TS//CEO) [redacted]
[redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted]

(S//CEO)

[redacted]

Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism – CSIS Assessment

(S//CEO)

[redacted] the current information environment continues to be characterized by extreme narratives, particularly those opposed to COVID-19 restrictions.

(S//CEO) Direct and indirect threats against the Prime Minister continue to be observed on various social media outlets and are being reported to the RCMP via both Elections Canada and SITE TF channels. Elections Canada personnel are maintaining communication with police of jurisdiction (PoJ) and are reporting local instances of disturbances at advanced polls. The most serious incident recently reported is an alleged attempt by a vehicle to gain entry to the secure area around the Canadian History Museum in Gatineau during the evening of the All Party Leaders' debate on 9 September. The individual was arrested without incident [redacted]

(S//CEO) Our overall assessment remains: while it is assessed that extreme narratives and conspiracy theories pushed by influencers will not generally foster mobilization of threat actors seeking to use violence for ideological objectives, we cannot discount the possibility that a subset of threat actors may be galvanized into action and triggered by such narratives or extremist content.

(S//CEO)

[redacted]