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Deputy Minister    Sous-ministre

Ottawa, Canada  
K1A 0P8

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DATE: **FEB 01 2021**

File No.: PS-032829

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE MINISTER**  
**OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

**COUNTERING FOREIGN INTERFERENCE**

(Signature required)

**ISSUE**

s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence

**BACKGROUND**

Foreign interference (FI) is considered to be a subset of the broader Hostile Activities by State Actors (HASA). s. 39 - Cabinet Confidence FI activities, such as intimidating communities, interfering with current and former political actors, influencing student associations, academics and other individuals, pose a serious threat to the security of Canada. Ultimately, FI undermines Canada's national interest, sovereignty, and our communities. As such, FI is one of the most complex strategic threats to Canada's national security.

Public Safety Canada (PS), CSIS, the RCMP and CBSA are among those leading the efforts to counter FI. Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) also have important roles in defending against and responding to FI.

The current geostrategic environment has emboldened a variety of countries to assert their interests more aggressively through FI activities. Canada has a range of measures in its toolkit that can be used to counter FI; however, more coordinated and comprehensive actions could be taken within existing authorities to protect Canada and Canadians from this threat.

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Nevertheless, taking actions in the short-term to fully maximizing the use of current authorities can raise specific challenges. For example, even with the recent targeted amendments introduced in former Bill C-59, the *CSIS Act* of 1984 does not fully equip CSIS to face the technological, legal and threat environment of 2021.

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### **CONSIDERATIONS**

Using our tools to their full potential to counter FI in a calculated and targeted way would help the Government to address current FI activities while continuing to seek ways of modernizing our approach. For instance, the Government of Canada could increase the use of public attribution and denunciation of FI to challenge threat actors more directly and convey the message that Canada will take action. The tabling of your letter to Parliamentarians on FI in the House of Commons on January 25, 2021 is one such example. Other actions could include the use of foreign cyber operations, diplomatic levers and increased engagement with and awareness raising among targeted sectors.

It should be noted, however, that taking further actions against FI could result in some retaliatory measures on the part of some hostile states. Assessing potential risks and risk tolerance will be key in adopting a more forward-leaning posture.

Additionally, an updated policy and legislative approach is needed to best position Canada to counter the FI threat. This includes modernizing the *CSIS Act* to ensure that CSIS has the right tools to investigate and address the FI threat.

### **NEXT STEPS**

PS is currently drafting a document intended for public release this spring. This document aims to sensitize Canadians to the scale and the scope of FI and what the Government of Canada is doing to address it, and will build on your letter to Parliamentarians.

In the longer term, PS officials, in collaboration with interdepartmental partners, will continue policy work on the whole-of-government approach to countering HASA. This includes

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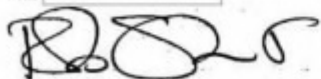
examining our available tools and developing options for new legislative authorities; assessing how we structure our security and intelligence community in response to the threat; and determining how to integrate the broader whole-of-government approach that goes beyond traditional security and intelligence partners.

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**RECOMMENDATION**

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Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me or Dominic Rochon, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, National Cyber and Security Branch, at



Rob Stewart  
 Enclosures: (6)

I approve:

I do not approve:

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 Bill Blair, P.C., C.O.M., M.P.

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