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Associate Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cindy Termorshuizen

June 8 DMCIR-SITE Discussion

Thursday, June 8, 2023, 13:00 to 13:30 – In person at PCO (convened by NSIA)

Context

- Deputy Ministers responsible for the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections (SITE) Task Force will be meeting before the DM Committee on Intelligence Response (DMCIR) meeting on Thursday, June 8 (scheduled at 13:00) to discuss the monitoring and analysis updates from the SITE Task Force.
- This is the first SITE-specific meeting of its kind. It is expected that going forward, the SITE discussion will continue to be a prelude to the DMCIR meeting, freeing up the DMCIR meeting for non-SITE and non-by-election related business.
- The agenda for this meeting is expected to include: (1) SITE analysis since June 1, 2023; and, (2) a discussion on the draft Communications Framework put together by PCO Communications.

Objectives

- Express support for the draft Communications Framework, noting clarity is required on what level of Foreign Interference will initiate this framework.
- Convey that the current by-elections are an opportunity to explore ways to rebalance the work of SITE in view of evolving mandates, capacities, and resources; in anticipation for anticipated general elections.

Talking points

Top-line messages:

- **Draft Communications Framework:** GAC is supportive of the Communications Framework. However, the Framework needs to be more clear about the specific threshold for public communications. What is the threshold for responding during the election period? What is the role of the Communications Framework around any "potential" FI that does not reach the threshold of impacting the by-elections?
- Additionally, GAC is supportive of using discussions on communications to think about how the Government of Canada can move towards more regular briefings (with media and/or the public) on FI issues outside of elections.
- **RRM Canada monitoring:** RRM Canada continues to assess that the vast majority of content about the by-elections originated from recognizable Canadian news sites. RRM Canada has not discovered any significant indicators that a foreign entity attempted to manipulate the information space with regard to the by-elections.
- **RRM Canada mandate:** Given the evolving context and the resourcing from Budgets 2022 and 2023 to Public Safety, Elections Canada, and PCO-Democratic Institutions, other departments may be better poised for monitoring the domestic information space. It is timely to leverage the by-election experience to mandate SITE to review and advise DMCIR on updates to the respective mandates of members.
- RRM Canada would still participate in SITE, and provide monitoring and analysis, but from a broader international perspective and regarding global information threats.

Background

Draft Communications Framework: PCO Communications drafted this Communications Framework to outline the communication objectives and procedure during the by-election election period, and

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following the June 19 by-elections. GAC comments have been integrated and GAC communications officials are aware of the framework.

RRM Canada Monitoring: RRM Canada has been monitoring the information space around the by-elections, and providing a daily brief on findings to the SITE Task Force, since May 24, 2023. Monitoring includes analysis of China-based social media platforms.

Draft Communications Framework: The Department previously provided you with notes pursuant to RRM Canada's role in SITE for the Thursday, May 25 meeting of DMCIR. In brief, the requirement to monitor the Canadian information space during general election (and now by-election) periods requires RRM Canada to divert resources away from fulfilling its international mandate. In view of other departments being resourced to undertake domestic monitoring (Budgets 2022 and 2023 provided funding to combat foreign interference to Public Safety, Elections Canada and PCO) RRM Canada's role on SITE could evolve to provide monitoring and analysis more in line with its non-general election work.

The cost for RRM Canada's involvement in SITE is significant, as it requires pausing and scaling back a range of activities which are part of the core mandate, including building a collective response to foreign threats to democracy and foreign information and manipulation and reporting on key foreign policy priorities (i.e., Ukraine, Russia).

Domestic context: FI issues continue to be vigorously debated in Parliament and in the media. On Tuesday, June 6, 2023, David Johnston appeared before the House of Commons Procedure and House Affairs Committee for three hours to answer questions about his first report as Independent Special Rapporteur on Foreign Interference (ISR).

Additionally, the ISR will be continuing his work, including public hearings, until October 2023, and the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) and National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA) are continuing their work in studying FI related to Canadian general elections. GAC continues to provide any requested materials to these bodies, and GAC officials are participating in requested briefings and meetings.

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Enclosures (list, if any):

Approvals and consultations:

IMPORTANT NOTE: ADMs are accountable for the notes, but may delegate approval to others. Ensure that consultations have been done across the department, as relevant.

Level	Symbol	Name
Director		
<i>Director approval also confirms that the title of the note can be proactively disclosed.</i>	<i>Redactions to title, if required:</i>	
DG (if required)	IOD	Tara Denham
ADM (if required)		
Consulted (add lines if needed)	Symbol	Name

Checklist: Please verify and check all boxes before submitting the note.

Does the note include/illustrate:	
Why this meeting matters?	
What we want to get out of the meeting, including next steps on key issues?	
What bilateral and multilateral issues should/could be raised?	
Up-to-date fact sheet appended?	
Has the note been...:	
Thoroughly edited for grammar, acronyms, and to ensure it's clear and concise?	
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Check whether accompanying cue cards are to be prepared and that TPs align	

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