

For Public Release

Clerk of the Privy Council and
Secretary to the CabinetGreffier du Conseil privé et
Secrétaire du CabinetOttawa, Canada
K1A 0A3SECRETMEMORANDUM FOR THE PRIME MINISTER

c.c.: Nathalie G. Drouin, Jody Thomas

ENGAGEMENT WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS ON FOREIGN INTERFERENCE
THREATS

(Decision Sought/Signature Required)

SUMMARY

- Recent media reports have brought attention to allegations of foreign interference (FI) during the 2019 and 2021 General Elections, and highlighted that parliamentarians may be of specific interest to FI threat actors.
- To counter FI threats, increased awareness – through means of public communication and tailored engagements – is an effective strategy. As such, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) has been working with Public Safety Canada to develop advice and options for tailored engagement with current and former parliamentarians who have been of interest to FI threat actors.
- The Minister of Public Safety also intends to send a letter to Members of Parliament (MPs) and Senators wherein he will discuss FI threats and offer them unclassified security briefings. This engagement will be done under the Minister's own authorities.
- PCO recommends that you offer classified briefings (provided by Canada's security agencies) to leaders of recognized federal political parties (i.e., parties with at least 12 elected members, as per the *Parliament of Canada Act*). These briefings would support better-informed policy debate, and better position Canada's political party leaders to take action to protect themselves, their parties, and Canada's national security from specific threats. It would also enable these leaders to read any classified annex of the upcoming report of the Independent Special Rapporteur (ISR).
- To facilitate these briefings, it is also proposed that Party Leaders be processed for a TOP SECRET security clearance and be briefed on handling classified information. Together, these measures would enable Canada's security agencies to prepare and deliver tailored classified briefings up to the TOP SECRET level, as needed.
- If you agree with this proposal, please sign the enclosed letters to Party Leaders (**Tab A**) advising them of the opportunity for classified briefings. Once received, PCO will liaise with the offices of the Party Leaders to ensure security forms are properly filled out and submitted. Upon receiving clearances, PCO will then work to coordinate the briefings.
- **Do you agree?**

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- 2 -

SECRET**BACKGROUND**

- Recent media reports have brought attention to allegations of FI in Canadian democratic processes during the 2019 and 2021 General Elections. These allegations have led to calls for a public inquiry into FI in Canada. Debate on these issues has been ongoing in the House of Commons, including within the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (PROC).
- Allegations in the media suggested that some Parliamentarians have been of interest to foreign interference threat actors. While media articles do not always accurately portray intelligence agencies' reports and assessments, [redacted] parliamentarians have, in fact, been wittingly or unwittingly involved in FI attempts with various levels of intensity.
- To provide further clarity on the status of FI threats related to current and former parliamentarians, CSIS has been reviewing its holdings and has created a list of individuals who have been of interest to FI actors. The list, on which you have been briefed separately, [redacted]
[redacted]. CSIS has initiated threat reduction measures (TRMs) in some cases and is working with Public Safety Canada to develop advice for engagement with individuals for whom TRMs are not possible or recommended.
- Additionally, on May 16, the Minister of Public Safety issued a Ministerial Direction (**Tab B**) to CSIS in which he articulated his expectations as to how threats to Parliament and parliamentarians would be investigated, mitigated, and communicated. As well, the Minister of Public Safety also intends to send a letter to his parliamentary colleagues in which he will discuss FI threats, and offer each caucus and any independent members unclassified security briefings, which could take place before the summer parliamentary recess.

Considerations

- As lawmakers and politicians, all parliamentarians are at risk of being targeted by foreign interference actors and, increasingly, by domestic extremism, as are many of their constituents.
- Should this initiative move forward, party leaders would first have to undergo a security clearance process, the outcome of which cannot be pre-determined. As well, while they would be briefed on receiving and handling classified information, they could claim immunity, based on parliamentary privilege, were they to divulge classified information during House of Commons proceedings.
- Based on the experience of the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections (SITE) Task Force (in the context of previous federal elections), some party leaders may choose not to accept an invitation to classified briefings. Nevertheless, offering these

For Public Release

- 3 -

SECRET

briefings to opposition leaders would reiterate the government's commitment to transparency.

- This approach could also allow classified reports from National Security & Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP), the National Intelligence and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA), and the Independent Special Rapporteur to be shared with political party leaders.

Recommendation

- In view of ongoing debates around FI, democratic processes, and growing threats to Canada's national security, it is proposed that, further to the initiatives outlined above, classified briefings be offered to the leaders of political parties. In the near term, this would serve to shed light on allegations of foreign interference in political spheres. It would also highlight other threats to Canada's national security, political parties, and parliamentarians themselves.
- Such briefings would support informed policy debate on FI and other national security threats, such as violent extremism. The briefings would better position Canada's political party leaders to take action to protect themselves, their parties, and Canada's national security. This initiative could also signal publicly that Canada and all Canadian political parties take threats to national security seriously.
- The focus of the briefings would be to provide leaders of political parties with information that is not available publicly, or through the regular means by which officials provide unclassified information to Parliament. As such, it is envisioned that the briefings would be delivered at the SECRET level, though with the option of going up to TOP SECRET, if required. Care would be taken to protect all Cabinet Confidences.
- The briefings would carefully balance the privacy rights of individuals with national security considerations. The *Privacy Act* "permits the disclosure of personal information where, in the opinion of the head of the institution (that is disclosing said information), the public interest in disclosure clearly outweighs any invasion of privacy that could result from the disclosure." As such, personal information related to threats facing or posed by members of the party could be disclosed to the political leader as part of these briefings, as required. Political party leaders' awareness of threats affecting or involving the members of their parties in both the House of Commons and the Senate would assist them in proactively applying mitigating measures, which would directly contribute to the public interest.
- Individual classified briefings would be offered to political party leaders exclusively and would be delivered in person in a secure location. This format would allow increased awareness of those key elected officials, while protecting classified and personal information. PCO would coordinate the briefings, which would involve senior representation from CSIS and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE), and would take place every four months, or as needed.

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TAB | A
Onglet

For Public Release

- 4 -

SECRET

- PCO would advise your office of the dates and topics in advance of the briefings. The first briefing would offer an overview of the intelligence community's activities, processes and priorities, and would then focus on the foreign interference threat, including in past federal elections. Future briefings would prioritize the most pressing national security topics of the day, potentially including foreign interference and ideologically motivated violent extremism.
- If you agree with this proposal, it is recommended that you sign the enclosed letters to political party leaders that lays out the initiative, and explains the clearance process as the mechanism to offer them classified briefings. PCO will engage with Leaders' offices to ensure that security clearance paperwork is properly filled out and submitted. Upon confirmation of clearances, PCO will coordinate the briefings, in consultation with your office.

Janice Charette

Attachments

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Dear Mr. Poilievre,

The recent months have underscored that Canada is facing a number of national security threats, including some that may affect our democratic institutions. In a world where our adversaries have many evolving tools to threaten our national interests, it is more important than ever to have a healthy, transparent dialogue on these threats and how best to counter them.

As such, I am writing to you, as well as to other leaders of recognized parties in the House of Commons, to offer you the possibility of receiving quarterly classified briefings on national security threats from senior officials from the intelligence community. The first briefing would provide an overview of the activities, processes and priorities of Canada's intelligence community, as well as an overview of the foreign interference threat. Should you agree, the office of my National Security and Intelligence Advisor, Ms. Jody Thomas, will make arrangements with your office.

In order to be able to receive the classified briefings, you will be required to receive a security clearance. Officials from the Privy Council Office (PCO) will engage your office shortly to start the security screening process.

I trust that you will find these briefings helpful.

Sincerely,

Mr. Pierre Poilievre
Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada
Suite 754, Confederation Building
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

For Public Release

Monsieur Blanchet,

Au cours des derniers mois, nous avons pu constater que le Canada est confronté à un certain nombre de menaces à la sécurité nationale, dont certaines pourraient avoir une incidence sur nos institutions démocratiques. Dans un monde où nos adversaires disposent de nombreux outils évolutifs pour menacer nos intérêts nationaux, il est plus important que jamais d'avoir un dialogue sain et transparent sur de telles menaces et sur la meilleure façon de les contrer.

C'est pourquoi je vous écris, à vous et aux autres chefs des partis reconnus à la Chambre des communes, pour vous offrir la possibilité de recevoir tous les trois mois des breffages classifiés sur les menaces à la sécurité nationale de la part de hauts fonctionnaires de la communauté du renseignement. Ce premier breffage consistera en un aperçu des activités, processus et priorités de la communauté du renseignement du Canada ainsi qu'un aperçu de la menace d'ingérence étrangère. Si vous êtes d'accord, le bureau de ma conseillère à la sécurité nationale et au renseignement, M^{me} Jody Thomas, prendra des dispositions avec votre bureau.

Pour recevoir les breffages classifiés, vous devrez obtenir une autorisation de sécurité. Des représentants du Bureau du Conseil privé (BCP) communiqueront sous peu avec votre bureau pour entamer le processus d'enquête de sécurité.

J'espère que ces breffages vous seront utiles.

Sincères salutations,

M. Yves-François Blanchet
Chef du Bloc Québécois
Suite 202, édifice Wellington
Chambre des communes
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

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For Public Release

Dear Mr. Singh,

The recent months have underscored that Canada is facing a number of national security threats, including some that may affect our democratic institutions. In a world where our adversaries have many evolving tools to threaten our national interests, it is more important than ever to have a healthy, transparent dialogue on these threats and how best to counter them.

As such, I am writing to you, as well as to other leaders of recognized parties in the House of Commons, to offer you the possibility of receiving quarterly classified briefings on national security threats from senior officials from the intelligence community. The first briefing would provide an overview of the activities, processes and priorities of Canada's intelligence community, as well as an overview of the foreign interference threat. Should you agree, the office of my National Security and Intelligence Advisor, Ms. Jody Thomas, will make arrangements with your office.

In order to be able to receive the classified briefings, you will be required to receive a security clearance. Officials from the Privy Council Office (PCO) will engage your office shortly to start the security screening process.

I trust that you will find these briefings helpful.

Sincerely,

Mr. Jagmeet Singh
Leader of the New Democratic Party
Suite 579, Confederation Building
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

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[Public Safety Canada](#)[Home](#) → [Transparency](#) → [Ministerial Directions](#)→ [Ministerial Direction on Threats to the Security of Canada Directed at Parliament and Parliame...](#)

Ministerial Direction on Threats to the Security of Canada Directed at Parliament and Parliamentarians

The Parliament of Canada is at the heart of Canada's democracy. As such, it is imperative that all parliamentarians are able to exercise their roles fully and without hindrance or interference from foreign states or hostile actors.

To this end, I expect that threats to the security of Canada directed at Parliament and parliamentarians, including those conducted through their family and staff, receive the highest level of attention from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) in collaboration with the national security and intelligence community. In doing so, I continue to expect that CSIS will at all times respect the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the rule of law.

Pursuant to subsection 6(2) of the *Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act*, I have issued the following direction to describe my expectations in this regard.

1. CSIS will investigate all threats to the security of Canada that target Parliament and parliamentarians in a manner proportional to the threat and the importance of Parliament to Canada's democracy and national security.
2. When CSIS assesses, in accordance with its mandate, there to be a threat to the security of Canada directed at Parliament or a parliamentarian, it will pursue the appropriate lawful methods in response, including but not limited to the taking of threat reduction measures and disclosures to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or other law enforcement agencies.
3. CSIS will seek, wherever possible within the law and while protecting the security and integrity of national security and intelligence operations and investigations, to ensure that parliamentarians are informed of threats to the security of Canada directed at them. This may involve direct disclosures, or by working with other bodies, such as Government of Canada departments, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or other law enforcement agencies, as the law permits.
4. The Minister of Public Safety will be informed of all instances of threats to the security of Canada directed at Parliament or parliamentarians in a timely manner and with an explanation of how CSIS will implement the above directions.

Date modified:

2023-05-16