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Public Inquiry Into Foreign Interference  
in Federal Electoral Processes and  
Democratic Institutions

Enquête publique sur l'ingérence étrangère  
dans les processus électoraux et les  
institutions démocratiques fédéraux

## *In Camera* Examination Summary: Ms. Greta Bossenmaier, Mr. Vincent Rigby, Mr. David Morrison and Mr. Mike MacDonald

Former National Security and Intelligence Advisors to the Prime Minister (“NSIAs”) were examined by Commission counsel during in camera hearings held between February 28 and March 6, 2024. The witnesses – Greta Bossenmaier, Vincent Rigby, David Morrison and Mike MacDonald – were examined in panel format. Counsel for the Attorney General of Canada appeared on behalf of the Government of Canada and had the opportunity to examine witnesses. The hearing was held in the absence of the public and other Participants.

### Notes to Reader

- Commission Counsel’s explanatory notes are contained in square brackets to assist the reader.
- This summary has been produced in reliance on subclause (a)(iii)(C)(II) of the Commission’s Terms of Reference. It discloses the evidence pertinent to clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of the Commission’s Terms of Reference that, in the opinion of the Commissioner, would not be injurious to the critical interests of Canada or its allies, national defence or national security.
- This summary contains information that relates to the Commission’s mandate under clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of its Terms of Reference. Information provided during the examination that relates to other aspects of the Commission’s Terms of Reference has been omitted from this summary, but may be adduced by the Commission at a later stage of its proceedings.
- This summary should be read in conjunction with the **Privy Council Office (“PCO”)** Institutional Report and the unclassified interview summary prepared by Commission Counsel.

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## 1. Examination by Commission Counsel

- [1] Mr. Rigby, Mr. Morrison and Mr. MacDonald confirmed the accuracy of the classified summary of the Commission Counsel interview on February 16, 2024. The witnesses adopted the classified version as part of their evidence before the Commission.
- [2] Ms. Bossenmaier was not present for the interview with Commission Counsel. She clarified the Panel of Five 2019 witness summary noting that as a member of the Panel and as the co-Chair of the **Deputy Ministers Elections Security Coordinating Committee (“ESCC”)** she served as a direct link between the two.

### 1.1 Role of the NSIA

- [3] Ms. Bossenmaier explained that the NSIA has three main roles: (1) to provide the **Prime Minister (“PM”)** and Cabinet with advice about national security issues, operations, and policy, (2) to act as a coordinator and convenor within the national security community, (3) to deal with international partners and countries within and beyond the Five Eyes. Mr. Rigby described the latter role as stakeholder engagement writ large. He explained that the NSIA will sometimes engage with domestic partners like police commissioners and members of the academic community. Mr. Rigby also added that at various times the Foreign and Defense Policy Advisor reported up through the NSIA instead of through a separate channel. The witnesses agreed that the role of the NSIA has changed over time as each incumbent has shaped it to meet the demands of their time.
- [4] Mr. Morrison testified that during his tenure as Acting NSIA in the fall of 2021, he was focused on intelligence related to foreign interference as a member of the Panel of Five, and afterwards. The broader national security issues that were ongoing at the same time included the fall of Kabul and evacuation of Canadians from Afghanistan, negotiating the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor (who were released on September 24, 2021), a crisis in Ethiopia where it looked like there might be a need for another evacuation of Canadians, a trade crisis, as well as multiple summits (e.g., the climate change summit and the G20 summit in Rome). All of these had national security dimensions.

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- [5] With respect to intelligence, Mr. Morrison described the NSIA's role as one of discernment, meaning the role of the NSIA is not merely to feed intelligence through to the PM but rather to bring a worldview that contextualizes any piece or body of intelligence. For instance, CSIS has a security mandate and a focus on threats, and that informs their worldview and the lens through which they see things. As National Security Advisor, he took that as an input, but also looked at other available intelligence, including a steady stream of diplomatic reporting, open-source media, and conversations with foreign counterparts and with the Prime Minister to form a broader worldview, and advise the Prime Minister. Of course, matters that are urgent or pressing are handled differently. But intelligence that comes in the NSIA's daily packet, which contains information from many sources, is used to form a view and advise the Prime Minister. Mr. Rigby agreed that the NSIA has an all-source approach to intelligence.
- [6] Mr. Rigby testified that a lot of the information coming from CSIS and CSE is often unassessed intelligence. Assessed products typically only come after there is a body of intelligence gathered over a period of several months. In deciding whether to bring something to the Prime Minister, the NSIA has to ask whether the intelligence is ready to be briefed up and is something the Prime Minister needs to see, or whether it makes sense to let the story develop, unfold and mature
- [7] When asked whether signals intelligence is inherently more reliable than human source intelligence, Mr. Rigby explained that it is difficult to make that generalization. Mr. Rigby explained that every piece of intelligence has to be tested and put in context, which may mean going back to the source to learn more. Human sources often have agendas, they approach things from a certain context, so you have to learn about their reporting history and how reliable of a source they are. While some might say that signals intelligence is much more reliable because it's a recording, it's not necessarily as simple as that. For example, even in a telephone conversation, people may know they're being recorded, and may say things that they want another state to hear. Mr. Morrison added that if you have a recording of a telephone conversation, you know that what was said, was indeed said. But he agreed that one must still be skeptical because it could be designed to influence you. With human sources, you need to consider whether the information is true

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or not and/or whether it might be designed to throw you off. Ms. Bossenmaier added that even with a recorded conversation, due diligence is required to determine whether the people in the recording are actually the people identified as speaking, and whether they are having a genuine conversation [as opposed to a conversation designed to mislead]. Due diligence is required regardless of where the intelligence is coming from. There are different nuances to that work depending on the type of intelligence. She noted that understanding intelligence requires thinking about the mosaic effect, and how different pieces of the puzzle come together at different times to form a picture. Sometimes you might not know where a piece will fit until you have enough to form a picture.

## 1.2 Chronology of NSIAs

- [8] Mr. Morrison served as Interim NSIA after Ms. Bossenmaier retired in early December 2019, until Mr. Rigby was appointed to the role in January 2020. On June 30, 2021 Mr. Morrison again assumed the role as Interim NSIA. From around July 22, 2021- August 8, 2021 Mr. Morrison took a medical leave of absence. During that time period, Mr. MacDonald assumed the role of Interim NSIA.

## 1.3 Secretariats supporting the NSIA

- [9] The **Security and Intelligence Secretariat (S&I)** housed within PCO is the policy center of the national security community and sometimes the defence and policing community. Mr. MacDonald served as Assistant Secretary to the S&I Secretariat for three years. He described it as a place of coordination, meeting with colleagues across the community once or twice a week so that the entire national security community could be kept apprised of each others' work, mirroring the coordination work that the NSIA performed with its colleagues at that level. In times of crisis or heightened vigilance, this secretariat was responsible for pulling together the appropriate people within government, where there needed to be operational coordination. The S&I secretariat is also responsible for the security operations, including clearance process and the vetting of individuals for Governor-in-Council appointments. Like the NSIA, the S&I secretariat also forged relationships with domestic and international partners, including the Ottawa Police

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Service, the Parliamentary Protective Service, Head of Senate Security, and counterparts within the Five Eyes.

[10] **Deputy Ministers Committee on Operational Coordination (DMOC)** is a committee that meets weekly in a secure space to discuss pressing national security issues and share information. This committee is chaired by the NSIA and attended by representatives from all of the core national security agencies and government departments whose mandates have a national security element. While there is sometimes a topic or two on the formal agenda, it is also the forum where participants provide updates on what they think the others need to know, or ask about particular pieces of intelligence. It is a “don’t miss” meeting because of the cross-pollination that take place. No matter what else is going on, you will see the people you need to talk to at DMOC. Where there is anything that is urgent or fast-breaking, an *ad hoc* DMOC meeting is called. Mr. Rigby explained that DMOC is focussed on policy and operational updates, as compared to other committees that may have more long-term/strategic policy mandates. When he was NSIA, Mr. Rigby would use the DMOC to ask about what he needed to know in order to brief the Prime Minister, and there is was an expectation that people would come forward. He added that DMOC also conduct exercises on various scenarios. Mr. Morrison and Ms. Bossenmaier reflected on the level of trust that exists among the participants of DMOC and how that creates an atmosphere in which they feel comfortable calling each other and sharing information. Mr. Macdonald added that the **Assistant Deputy Minister National Security Operations Committee (“ADM NSOps”)**, which mirrors DMOC at the ADM level, supports DMOC and also meets weekly.

[11] During Mr. Rigby’s tenure, he also ran the Deputy Ministers Intelligence Committee, which looked at both strategic and operational level intelligence.

[12] **Deputy Ministers Election Security Coordination Committee** was established in the lead up to the 2019 election, and was co-chaired by the NSIA and Elections Canada. This committee was set up to ensure that Elections Canada and the Commissioner of Elections were brought together with the key intelligence agencies to deal with elections security. This Committee was active during both Ms. Bossenmaier and Mr. Rigby’s tenures as NSIA. Mr. Morrison confirmed that during his tenure as acting NSIA, this

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committee met once in July 2021 but he did not recall whether it met subsequently in the period leading up to the 2021 election.

#### 1.4 Election Periods

- [13] Ms. Bossenmaier explained that the NSIA had many active national security matters on her plate in 2019, including both policy issues moving through Cabinet, and operational issues. At that time, amongst other things, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor were arbitrarily detained and, the government had to respond to a situation related to counter-terrorism. The measures that were adopted in advance of the 2019 election were the first “whole of government” effort put in place to protect an election. This required ensuring that everyone was tuning their systems and processes up to look for and consider foreign interference in the election process and establishing what the baseline foreign interference landscape looked like. The Panel of Five was put in place, the SITE Task Force was stood up, political party representatives were cleared to Secret levels and being briefed. Ultimately, she described an all hands on deck effort by the government to create an ecosystem to safeguard the election during this time period. She remarked that in her discussions with international partners, the magnitude and scope of this effort (including the Panel of Five, the SITE Task Force, , was seen as novel, and a leading practice in 2019. Other countries were interested in what Canada was doing and wanted to know how it was working out.
- [14] Mr. Rigby noted that foreign interference is not a new phenomenon – it has been around for a long time. But the game changer was the allegations around Russian interference in the 2016 United States Presidential Election; this was the turning point that informed decision-making and pushed the structures that were set up for 2019.
- [15] Ms. Bossenmaier recalls being briefed on FI threat activity during the 2019 election. As a member of the Panel of Five, she confirmed that nothing rose to the level such that the Panel considered it could have a material impact on the election. Ms. Bossenmaier continues to be of this view.

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[16] Ms. Bossenmaier was asked about a **CSIS National Security Brief (“CNSB”)**<sup>1</sup> that was recalled in October 2019, which contained allegations about FI in the Don Valley North riding nomination process. Ms. Bossenmaier said it was reasonable to assume that she would have read the report and discussed it with the CSIS Director, given the importance of foreign interference to her at the time, but she does not specifically recall doing so. Ms. Bossenmaier does not know why the Director decided to recall the report, as that is a question for the Director himself. Ms. Bossenmaier does not recall ever asking that a report be recalled. Ms. Bossenmaier explained that it was not in her remit to direct that a report be recalled or changed. It was within her remit, as NSIA, to have a conversation with the Director about a report and ask questions like “what does this mean?”, “how comfortable are you?”, “where does this fit into the mosaic?”, “how did this transpire?”, “are the right people on the distribution list?” and “how does this fit with another piece of intelligence?”. But she explained that the heads of the security agencies have their own authorities and are responsible for reporting anything they felt was important to report on.

### 1.5 Diplomatic Responses to Foreign Interference

[17] Mr. Morrison was asked about diplomatic responses to alleged foreign interference. He explained that economic sanctions are legal and indeed a key part of any country’s diplomatic toolkit. Research with a view to potential economic sanctions is something that Canada, like other nations, performs. The word “sanctions” (particularly when it is coming through translation) should therefore not be taken as something necessarily nefarious, or even necessarily foreign interference, nor is research on politicians. In Canada, we have to meet an “open-source” threshold (i.e. rely on open source information) in order to apply sanctions because it can be subject to judicial review. Mr. Rigby concurred that these are normal activities for foreign embassies and something that is expected. Mr. MacDonald also noted that there is a grey zone in the context of FI, and that sometimes what CSIS describes as FI might instead be foreign influence or aggressive diplomatic behaviour.

[18] With respect to the *persona non grata* regime, Mr. Morrison explained that under the Vienna Convention, a country can ask a foreign diplomat to leave for any reason. There

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<sup>1</sup> CAN004728

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are a number of diplomatic tools short of declaring a diplomat *persona non grata*. Canada does not “PNG” a diplomat lightly, because it leads to a response. In the case of the PNG that occurred in the spring of 2023, it was preceded by a series of diplomatic efforts over the course of two years, including raising the issue of foreign interference dozens of times, and issuing several formal diplomatic notes. In response to Canada’s decision, a Canadian diplomat was kicked out of China.

### 1.6 Volume of Intelligence

[19] Mr. MacDonald spoke to the volume of intelligence produced by Canada, emphasizing that it is vast. Canada produces roughly 68,000 intelligence products per year, not including Five Eyes intelligence. He approximated, conservatively, that during his three years within PCO he read through about 25 000 to 28 000 intelligence reports. Some of the reports he received were of keen interest to Mr. Macdonald in his role. Others were not.