

Unclassified



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: Marco Mendicino, Member of Parliament for Eglinton—Lawrence

Marco Mendicino, Member of Parliament for Eglinton—Lawrence and former Minister of Public Safety was examined by Commission counsel on March 6, 2024 in an *in camera* hearing. Counsel for the Attorney General of Canada appeared on behalf of the Government of Canada and had the opportunity to examine the witness. The hearing was held in the absence of the other Participants.

1.1 Notes to Reader:

- Commission Counsel have provided explanatory notes 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 with the unclassified interview summary prepared by Commission Counsel.

2. Examination by Commission Counsel

- [1] Mr. Mendicino confirmed the accuracy of the summary of his interview and adopted it as part of his evidence before the Commission.

2.1 Background

- [2] Mr. Mendicino was appointed Minister of Public Safety following the 2021 federal election. He served in this role until July 26, 2023. He understood that the most important function of the Minister of **Public Safety (“PS”)** is to keep Canadians safe.
- [3] As Minister of Public Safety, Mr. Mendicino received intelligence from various agencies. After he took the position, he was briefed on what his mandate would be. This mandate implicated the PS Department, as well as a number of agencies for which he was directly responsible, including the **Royal Canadian Mounted Police (“RCMP”), Canadian Security Intelligence Service (“CSIS”), Canadian Border Security Agency (“CBSA”), Correctional Service of Canada (“CSC”), and Parole Board of Canada (“PBC”).**
- [4] Prior to becoming Minister of PS, Mr. Mendicino was responsible for the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada portfolio, which he held between 2019 and 2021. He was first elected in 2015 for the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence located in the region of Toronto. For the years preceding his time in Cabinet, he held a number of different positions, such as Ontario Caucus Chair and Parliamentary Secretary to a number of portfolios, including Justice, as well as Infrastructure and Communities.

2.2 Information flow

- [5] In the early days when Mr. Mendicino first took on the PS portfolio, the priority for the Department and the agencies was to situate Mr. Mendicino in his role and mandate, in addition to the priorities laid out in the Prime Minister’s mandate letter to Mr. Mendicino. One of the top priorities would have been **foreign interference (“FI”)**, which by that time, was a pervasive, persistent, sophisticated threat to Canada’s national security and was a known issue.

- [6] Mr. Mendicino testified that he would have been provided with background briefings on FI at the outset of his mandate. The information came to him in a variety of different forms, including oral briefings from the agencies, including CSIS. In some cases, oral briefings were supported by written documentation. As an example, Mr. Mendicino explained that he received clear documentation as part of the ministerial approval of CSIS warrants. In compliance with the law under the *CSIS Act*, Mr. Mendicino reviewed the warrants very carefully, especially when they involved FI. Mr. Mendicino also explained that he would receive comprehensive written documentation in addition to oral briefs to support decisions taken under his statutory authorities pursuant to the *Investment Canada Act*. Written documentation was also submitted to Mr. Mendicino in addition to oral briefings when threat reduction measures were proposed or contemplated.
- [7] Mr. Mendicino received a continuous and regular flow of intelligence as Minister of PS. He received briefings weekly and sometimes daily. He confirmed that raw intelligence was occasionally shared with him. In the early days of assuming the role, Mr. Mendicino testified that it was clear to him that there were numerous hostile actors who were trying to undermine Canada's national security by attacking various institutions, such as academic and economic institutions. He understood that various diaspora communities would be the target of these hostile actors.

2.3 Specific Briefings and Incidents

2.3.1 December 13, 2021 Briefing

- [8] Mr. Mendicino testified on a briefing he received from the CSIS Director David Vigneault on December 13, 2021 on the following topics:
- a) Efforts by a foreign state threat actor to interfere, in a clandestine and deceptive way, in democratic processes during the 2021 election;
 - b) Observations during the 2021 election of online and media activities against Mr. Erin O'Toole and Mr. Kenny Chiu that were potentially tied to the People's Republic of China, and the assessment that there was insufficient information to affirmatively attribute the campaign to this foreign state; and

c) Apparent efforts by another foreign state actor to interfere, in a clandestine and deceptive way, in democratic processes during the 2021 election.

[9] Mr. Mendicino emphasized that, as part of his early briefings as Minister of PS, he recalled that the key takeaway was that the 2019 and 2021 elections were free and fair and that the overall results of both elections were not compromised. Mr. Mendicino testified that he certainly took that as a source of comfort; otherwise, he would have been putting back to his officials some very direct questions about what to do about it.