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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

## Public Summary of the Classified *In Camera* Examination of: Bo Basler

Bo Basler from the **Canadian Security Intelligence Service (“CSIS” or the “Service”)** was examined by Commission counsel in the course of *in camera* hearings held between February 28 and March 6, 2024. Mr. Basler was examined in his capacity of former representative from a **CSIS Regional Office**. The witness was also asked to provide an overview of the structure and operation of CSIS. The Attorney General of Canada attended and had the opportunity to examine the witness. The hearing was held in the absence of the public and the other Participants.

### 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 CSIS Institutional Report prepared by the Government of Canada and the unclassified interview summaries of other CSIS witnesses.

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## 1. Examination by Commission Counsel

- [1] Mr. Basler confirmed the accuracy of the classified version of the CSIS Regions Interview Summary and adopted it as an accurate record of his interview with Commission Counsel.<sup>1</sup>
- [2] Mr. Basler provided background on his experience and his current position within the Service. Mr. Basler spent most of his career working for CSIS regional offices until 2023, when he was appointed to a position in **CSIS Headquarters (“CSIS HQ”)**. During the 2019 election he was a CSIS Regional Deputy Director General, and during the 2021 election, he was a CSIS Regional Director General.

### 1.1 CSIS Internal Organization-Overview

- [3] The CSIS Director holds the top position within the Service. Two Deputy Directors that are most relevant to these proceedings report to the CSIS Director: The **Deputy Director Policy and Strategies Partnerships (“DDP”)** and the **Deputy Director of Operations (“DDO”)**. The DDP develops and provides strategic policy advice to the Director and manages the Service’s strategic partnerships with external stakeholders. The DDO heads the directorate that is responsible for the collection, analysis and dissemination of intelligence. Intelligence is disseminated in various forms, referred to as intelligence products.
- [4] Several directorates support the DDO. The **Assistant Director of Collection (“ADC”)** oversees the CSIS Regions, who are responsible for collecting intelligence. The **Assistant Director of Requirements (“ADR”)** oversees (1) the Intelligence Assessment Branch; and (2) other specific branches, composed of intelligence officers and intelligence analysts, who focus on a particular theme or geographic area. One of these branches is focused on China.

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequent to the *in camera* hearing, an amended version of the classified CSIS Regions Interview Summary was issued. This was to correct an error discovered after Mr. Basler’s *in camera* testimony. By way of affidavit dated March 22, 2024, Mr. Basler confirmed the accuracy of the amended version.

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- [5] The Intelligence Assessment Branch is responsible for (1) assisting the development of Canada's intelligence priorities with the Government of Canada; and (2) implementing the intelligence priorities and requirements identified by the Government. It is also responsible for the dissemination of CSIS products throughout the Government of Canada.
- [6] Each unit located at CSIS HQ is responsible for (1) working with regional intelligence officers on intelligence priorities and collection activities related to their area of focus; (2) collecting intelligence from the regional offices; (3) analyzing incoming intelligence; and (4) determining what information is relevant to either foreign partners or domestic government clients.
- [7] For example, units within the ADR Directorate can direct CSIS Regional Offices to focus collection in particular areas based on intelligence priorities. The CSIS Regions then collect intelligence and forward it to the ADR Directorate for analysis, processing and dissemination. Mr. Basler added that there are continuous conversations between intelligence officers and analysts, as well as between the heads of HQ units and their counterparts across the country. These ongoing dialogues canvass intelligence priorities, what is working and not working, what regions are seeing, and who can assist whom.

## 1.2 Flow of Intelligence Within CSIS

- [8] CSIS Regions collect intelligence using different investigative methods. Intelligence is then used to draft operational reports, which are shared with the Service through a central database. Analysts and intelligence officers review operational reports and assess their importance to other government departments. Based on these assessments, the HQ units may share the tactical-level intelligence with other departments in the Canadian Government, where relevant, by creating and disseminating a CSIS Intelligence Report.
- [9] HQ units may also choose to use the intelligence to produce more detailed intelligence products which aggregate several operational reports to provide a more complete assessment of a particular issue. HQ units can produce several types of intelligence products, including CSIS Intelligence Reports, which contain tactical-level intelligence,

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and CSIS Intelligence Assessments, which assess multiple pieces of intelligence at a more comprehensive and strategic level.

- [10] More in-depth products may be written in response to a request from senior decision-makers outside the Service. The production time for intelligence products varies depending on complexity. Tactical-level pieces can be produced quickly. To support the Security Intelligence Threats to Elections Taskforce (SITE), during the 2019 and 2021 elections, operational reports were produced within 24 hours of intelligence collection, and then CSIS HQ had another 24 hours to analyze, process, and disseminate the intelligence. More in-depth analysis may take weeks because the author may need to review several years' worth of intelligence collection.
- [11] Mr. Basler explained that the compressed time-frame for intelligence reporting and dissemination during the elections was unusual. In ordinary circumstances, intelligence could take some time to circulate. Intelligence sometimes becomes relevant later on through additional analysis and understanding, which takes time.

### 1.3 Differences between the focus of CSIS Regions and CSIS Headquarters

- [12] CSIS Regions and CSIS HQ have different areas of focus.
- [13] CSIS Regions focus on investigating targets and collecting information. This requires building trust with sources, who at times risk their lives to share information. Because they are very conscious of the risk associated with collecting intelligence, CSIS Regions expect CSIS HQ to read their operational reports and to act on them in a timely fashion.
- [14] CSIS HQ focuses on the global assessment of incoming intelligence from CSIS Regions and foreign partners. Because CSIS HQ sees intelligence collected nationally and internationally, there is sometimes a difference of opinion between HQ and a Region as to the importance of particular intelligence reporting.
- [15] This difference in perspectives leads to a healthy tension between CSIS Regions and CSIS HQ. CSIS Regions expect CSIS HQ to act when they receive certain intelligence, pressuring CSIS HQ to justify its decisions including to postpone action, if that is the case.

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Disagreements between CSIS Regions and CSIS HQ on the meaning or value of a particular piece of intelligence can be escalated, sometimes to the Assistant Director level, though such escalation is rare.

#### 1.4 Information Sharing Between Regions

[16] One CSIS Regional Office can share intelligence with another. Operational reports are entered into a CSIS centralized database. Those with access rights can search for and review reports of interest. In addition, specific individuals also receive notification that the report has been uploaded. For instance, one CSIS Regional Office can flag the report for another CSIS Region to review.