

Security Intelligence
Review Committee



Comité de surveillance des activités
de renseignement de sécurité

Office of the Chairman

Bureau du président

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File No.: 2800-222

November 29, 2017

The Honourable Ralph Goodale, P.C.
Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
269 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P8

Dear Mr. Goodale,

Re: Review of CSIS Investigation of Right-Wing Extremism (SIRC Study 2017–03)

This letter provides you with the results of the Security Intelligence Review Committee (SIRC) review of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) investigation of right-wing extremism (RWE). **Annex A** provides background information.

Overall, SIRC found that CSIS activities conducted during the period of January 1, 2012, to June 30, 2017, complied with the CSIS Act and ministerial direction on intelligence priorities. CSIS activities were also consistent with the authorities and limitations set out in its targeting policy.

CSIS demonstrated that partnerships with police and law enforcement agencies were important. Besides helping to maintain awareness, these tools were valuable in investigating RWE activities that may present a threat to the security of Canada, including, for example, hate crime against Muslims.

In the Quebec Region, CSIS participation in the Structure de gestion policière contre le terrorisme in the past five years, and CSIS's relationships and effective information exchanges with domestic and international law enforcement and intelligence agencies helped CSIS eliminate gaps in its investigation of RWE threats. **SIRC recommends that CSIS determine the extent to which other regions' investigation of RWE could benefit from the experience and CSIS-law enforcement collaborative model in place in the Quebec Region.**

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SIRC examined in detail CSIS reporting on RWE following the January 2017 attack at the Grande Mosque in Quebec City and had no outstanding questions.

CSIS continues to assess the best means to engage investigative resources against RWE, as required, taking into consideration the limitations relating to lawful protest, advocacy and dissent; the high degree of police coverage of RWE threats in some jurisdictions; and the likelihood that the threat or use of violence will originate with one actor and be unplanned.

In the near term, CSIS anticipates that its investigation of RWE threats will be focused on

SIRC has no outstanding questions about CSIS's investigative posture relating to the investigation of RWE.

SIRC takes note of recent events outside of the period under review — for example, in Charlottesville, Virginia, in a number of European cities, and in Halifax, Nova Scotia — that show the potential threat of violent and non-violent RWE and highlight differences in respective national laws on free speech and on hate speech. SIRC will monitor how CSIS's investigation of RWE responds to any changes in the level of this threat in Canada. SIRC plans to revisit this subject in the medium-term.

We would be pleased to discuss the Committee's conclusions and recommendation with you.

Sincerely,



Pierre Blais, P.C.
Chair

c.c.: David Vigneault, Director of CSIS

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Annex A

Background

SIRC reviewed CSIS activities conducted during the period of January 1, 2012, to June 30, 2017.

SIRC examined all CSIS records relating to RWE (during the period under review), many of which consisted of

To assess relevant issues completely, SIRC examined other records that fell outside the period under review.

CSIS describes RWE in Canada as a movement that includes a range of groups and individuals espousing a number of issues and grievances, including those related to: racism, including white supremacy, white nationalism and "white religion"; anti-Semitism, nativism, and anti-immigration; anti-government and anti-law enforcement; and homophobia.

In recent years, CSIS's investigative efforts were driven mainly by specific national and international incidents that were affiliated to RWE (i.e., Breivik, Quebec Mosque).

According to CSIS, incidents of violent RWE in Canada are infrequent, generally unplanned and opportunistic, and carried out by individuals rather than groups.

In recent years, CSIS has dedicated resources to the investigation of RWE.

A subset of RWE groups promote hate online

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CSIS investigates RWE threats to the security of Canada under paragraphs 2(a) and 2(c) of section 12 of the CSIS Act relating to: espionage or sabotage that is against Canada or is detrimental to the interests of Canada or activities directed toward or in support of such espionage or sabotage (paragraph 2(a)); and/or, relating to activities within or relating to Canada directed toward or in support of the threat or use of acts of serious violence against persons or property for the purpose of achieving a political, religious or ideological objective within Canada or a foreign state (paragraph (2)(c)). Ministerial direction issued since 2012 did not mention RWE until the latest one issued in April 2017.

SIRC verified that CSIS's reporting was compliant with its Procedures on Targeting as appropriate. SIRC had access to all documents relating to the investigations. SIRC held briefings and questioned CSIS employees at Headquarters and in QR involved in RWE investigations, including employees

For most of the period under review (from January 2012 to March 2016), CSIS investigated RWE

In 2014, CSIS determined that the Internet activity of Canadian extremist groups, including activities associated with RWE,

review of its Program contained three principal findings relating to its investigation of RWE. First, a majority of RWE activities consisted of or were "near to" lawful protest, advocacy and dissent. The risk of a CSIS investigation examining such lawful activities was assessed as high. Second, the public order (versus the national security) threat was being appropriately addressed by police and law enforcement. Lastly, because of the first two findings, CSIS questioned the value added of its efforts.

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In January 2016, CSIS concluded that the extent and nature of the threat no longer met the threshold for an investigation.

In March 2016, CSIS ended its investigation of RWE.

Then, in January 2017 — following an attack by a lone gunman at the Grande Mosque in Quebec City that killed six and injured 19 others — CSIS's investigation of RWE was reopened

CSIS reopened the investigation in part because of government and partner interest in more information on RWE threats following the attack. Consistent with its mandate and authorities, CSIS has had frequent and comprehensive exchanges with police and law enforcement partners in order to assess intelligence and to better ascertain the threat posed by RWE.

Interviews with CSIS employees at headquarters and in QR demonstrated the value of CSIS's relationships and information exchanges with police and law enforcement agencies to the investigation of RWE.

For example, in the past five years, CSIS was invited to participate in the Structure de gestion policière contre le terrorisme, which comprises the Sureté du Québec (SQ), the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal and the RCMP ("C" Division). The SQ investigates RWE in the province,

Most recently, CSIS HQ gave direction to regions and international stations in April 2017

The regions were directed to maintain open lines of communication with local police and law enforcement agencies

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