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• (1100)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 126 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. I would like to remind participants of the following points.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed through the chair.

Members, please raise your hand if you wish to speak, whether you're participating in person or via Zoom. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on October 22, 2024, the committee is commencing its study of electoral interference and criminal activities in Canada by agents of the Government of India.

I would like to now welcome our witnesses today.

From the Privy Council Office, we have Nathalie Drouin, deputy clerk of the Privy Council Office and national security and intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister.

From the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, we have Daniel Rogers, director.

From the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, we have David Morrison, deputy minister of foreign affairs.

From the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have Tricia Geddes, associate deputy minister.

From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Michael Duheme, commissioner.

Thank you all for being here today on short notice. I understand Ms. Drouin will be leaving in the coming days, so it was really great that we could fit you all in on this date.

It has been agreed that Ms. Drouin will make an opening statement on behalf of the entire panel.

I yield the floor to you, Ms. Drouin. Go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Drouin (Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council Office and National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the

Prime Minister, Privy Council Office): Thank you very much, esteemed members of the committee.

My colleagues and I would like to thank the committee for the invitation to speak with you today regarding public safety of Canadians and foreign interference as it relates to the Government of India.

As this committee will understand, while we are here in full collaboration and ready to answer your questions, various obligations and statutes dictate what can be divulged to the committee owing to ongoing investigations, which limit what we can share. That is why we are not in a position to provide details on evidence.

However, we can share with you the rationale for concern for public safety, our attempts at co-operation with India, and how India's refusal to co-operate led us to where we are today.

[*English*]

For context, law enforcement has been investigating extreme violence within communities and CSIS has been looking into India foreign interference for years.

As you are aware, on September 18 of last year the Prime Minister announced in the House of Commons that Canada had become aware of credible allegations, based on intelligence, of a potential link between the killing of a Canadian citizen in Canada and agents of the Government of India.

Since the Prime Minister's statement last year, the government's response has followed two separate tracks: law enforcement and diplomacy. The diplomatic track addresses our relations with the Government of India in many areas. The law enforcement track has focused on public safety and the application of the rule of law.

The public safety of Canadians has been the paramount consideration for all our actions when evaluating our relationship with India. We do understand and value all that India represents to Canada as an international partner, as well as our significant people-to-people ties. However, we cannot ignore the attempts by agents of the Government of India to engage in coercion and violence in Canada to undermine our democracy.

The RCMP has also sent resources to work directly with India's central counterterrorism law enforcement agency to allow for co-operation on violent extremism.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

It is important for the public to understand what steps have been taken toward co-operation with India.

Throughout a series of meetings since August 2023, we have been clear that it is essential for our officials to maintain meaningful channels of communication and co-operation with India.

Specifically, we have had engagement between Canada's national security and intelligence adviser, or NSIA—my predecessor or myself—and other senior officials from Global Affairs Canada, or GAC, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, or the Privy Council Office, or PCO, and India's national security adviser on six occasions: August and September 2023 in New Delhi, November 2023 in Dubai, December 2023 in Saudi Arabia, January 2024 in London and March 2024 in Dubai.

[*English*]

I also spoke to my counterpart in May 2024, when the RCMP made arrests in the Nijjar case. In addition, I spoke on several occasions to the then High Commissioner of India to Canada. The Prime Minister also discussed the matter with Prime Minister Modi at the G20 in New Delhi last year. The Indian government's response was to spread a false narrative that Canada showed it no evidence and that we were ignoring its concerns about Khalistani violent extremism.

After months of investigation and several updates, the RCMP approached the deputy minister of foreign affairs and me in late August of this year to present serious concerns for public safety and to explore all potential tools available to us to disable India's network in Canada. This unprecedented request from the RCMP during an ongoing investigation spoke to the seriousness of the risk posed to Canadians and people living in Canada. The evidence revealed the *modus operandi* used by India to target people living in Canada.

The Indian government's mode of operating starts with the collection of information on Canada-based individuals through diplomats and consular officials in Canada and through other individuals acting as proxies. Some of these individuals and businesses are coerced and threatened. This information is shared with senior levels of the Indian government, who then direct the commission of serious criminal activities against Indo-Canadians through the kinetic use of Lawrence Bishnoi's organized crime network. Bishnoi is currently in jail in India, and he is able to order these actions through his gang, which has extensive criminal networks in India and internationally. Serious crimes committed in Canada include homicides,

assassination plots, perpetrated extortions and other extreme violence.

Given how alarming the evidence was, we knew we had to act and to act quickly. Our actions were driven by a pressing and serious concern for public safety. We needed the agents of the Indian government to stop their illegal activities in Canada, and we sought a collaborative approach with Indian officials.

[*Translation*]

We prepared ourselves for three scenarios for the Government of India's possible reactions.

One, co-operative—India ceases its violent activities in Canada and demonstrates accountability.

Two, somewhat co-operative.

Three, unco-operative—no accountability and denial.

Our desired outcome to address the public safety concerns in Canada was without any doubt the co-operative scenario.

• (1110)

[*English*]

In October, the RCMP sought to meet their Indian counterpart on two occasions, unsuccessfully, in order to share evidence. First, the RCMP was scheduled to travel to India to meet with their law enforcement counterparts. Unfortunately, India used an administrative technicality to block this meeting from occurring. Second, the RCMP travelled to Washington on October 10. While an Indian officer confirmed a meeting, they never showed up.

To signal the seriousness of the matter, the RCMP deputy commissioner, the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs and I travelled to Singapore to meet with the Indian national security adviser on October 12. The deputy commissioner spoke about and demonstrated a body of evidence that established clear links between agents of the Government of India and violent criminal activities taking place in Canada.

We provided three options to the Indian national security adviser that would allow us to address public safety and accountability.

The first option was to waive immunity for the diplomats and consulate involved in the scheme, in order to allow the RCMP to question them.

The second option—the comprehensive option—was for India to take accountability and manage the violence by, first, stopping illegal activities in Canada, including directing Bishnoi to cease and desist; second, issuing a public statement to adopt a mechanism looking into the *modus operandi* within India, as they did with the U.S. case; third, recalling their diplomats involved in the scheme; and, fourth and finally, announcing a new India-Canada high-level dialogue on countering extremism.

If the first two options were refused, Canada would declare the diplomats *personae non gratae* and the RCMP would issue a public statement explaining the situation to Canadians. This is what we called the “unilateral option”.

In order to address Canada's serious public safety concerns, our objective, as I said before, was the accountability option. During the meeting, our counterpart did not refuse to look into the accountability option, but he refused to acknowledge any links and denied everything we presented. We eventually agreed to pause, keep the meeting confidential—as suggested by my counterpart—and reconvene on October 14, Thanksgiving Monday, to further discuss this. Instead, the Government of India chose to not respect our agreement and went public the next day, Sunday, October 13, again using its false narrative that Canada has not shown any evidence.

By going public, the Government of India clearly signalled it was not going to be accountable or take the actions we need it to take to ensure public safety. It then became clear to the RCMP that we had to take the unilateral option, meaning PNG the diplomats and issue a public statement. We also decided to roll out our media engagement strategy in order to seek a broader audience and maximize impact.

Deputy Minister Morrison and I spoke to The Washington Post on background in the late afternoon of Sunday, October 13. We provided non-classified information on the actions we had taken to cooperate with India, and we explained how the evidence showed that the Government of India was conducting illegal activities against Canadians, including threats to their lives.

The Government of India has, from the beginning, accused Canada of engaging in a politically motivated investigation and using the Canadian media to further this. This is clearly not the case. However, we were prepared for this accusation to resurface. Therefore, we made a strategic decision to engage a respected international news outlet that had already published on the subject, in order to ensure that the record was straight and that our side of the story could be widely heard.

• (1115)

[Translation]

In the interest of public safety and disrupting a network fuelling violence in Canadian communities, Minister Joly declared six accredited Indian representatives *personae non gratae*.

India reciprocated by declaring *personae non gratae* six Canadian officials from our high commission in New Delhi.

This is not a decision Canada took lightly. Engaging with India is a central component of our Indo-Pacific strategy.

Our position is clear: Canada remains open to co-operation with India, but we need to have meaningful engagement from India on our grounded and serious public safety concerns.

Thank you for your time, and we are available for answers.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We go now to Ms. Dancho for six minutes, please.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here to discuss this very serious development.

RCMP Commissioner, in your own words, there was an unprecedented announcement that you and others made on October 14. You said that the violence orchestrated by India has become a “significant threat to public safety” in Canada, with “well over a dozen credible and imminent threats to life”.

Commissioner Duheme, on October 14 you said that you had clear evidence that links officials from the Government of India to violent crimes in Canada, but you provided no further details at that time. You said you needed to protect the open investigations and court proceedings.

Is that correct?

Commissioner Michael Duheme (Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): That's correct.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: At that time, you were of the opinion that those details, if released, could jeopardize the investigation into the murders and other violent acts by India on Canadians and people residing in Canada.

Is that correct?

Commr Michael Duheme: Yes, and I also commented on the evidence that was presented by Deputy Commissioner Flynn in Singapore with Madame Drouin and Mr. Morrison on the *modus operandi* of the Government of India.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Ms. Drouin already mentioned this a bit, but you are aware, of course, of the Washington Post article from that same day, October 14, which includes details of this sensitive information that you had chosen not to share because, again, you felt that it would jeopardize the investigation.

Is that correct?

Commr Michael Duheme: Just for clarity, there's a difference between sensitive information under the national security *chapeau*.... The information that's in the article was more or less some information from the investigations that we're doing.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: You don't feel that the details in the information in The Washington Post were sensitive in any way?

Commr Michael Duheme: They were not sensitive to national security as it's portrayed as national security sensitive information. It's information that is part of investigations. Normally we would like to keep that within, but sometimes we do release some information.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Therefore, normally you would have kept those details private, but they're of course not private anymore.

Commr Michael Duheme: I would say on occasion we have come out with some information to stimulate certain things when we're investigating. This one here, again, is not sensitive, as I mentioned, under the national security definition.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Commissioner, why did you choose not to release the information during your press conference that was at the same time released by The Washington Post? Why were those details kept from the public in Canada?

Commr Michael Duheme: I didn't think at that point that specific information was relevant. Again, I wasn't part of the conversation with The Washington Post.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Ms. Drouin, you were part of that conversation with The Washington Post. Is that correct?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: That's correct.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Did you feel that those details were not sensitive and would not jeopardize any investigation?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: Maybe I can share two things. The information we shared with the journalists over there was not classified. Maybe you know the job of journalists better than I do, but journalists also have separate sources. That's something that has to be said.

As I said also in my opening remarks, this is someone who has followed India stories many times. The information that was disclosed in The Washington Post is also available elsewhere.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: You can confirm, then, that the information about, for example, the Indian home affairs minister and his alleged involvement in these crimes in Canada, was not released in Canada.

Can you confirm that? That was released only in The Washington Post.

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: This is not information we provided to the journalist.

• (1120)

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Pardon me? It was not information you provided.

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: No.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Who provided that information, then, to the journalist?

You're not sure? It was not you who provided that information. Was it—

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: We did not.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Morrison, could you comment? Did you provide that information?

Mr. David Morrison (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Sure. The journalist called me and asked me if it was that person. I confirmed it was that person.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: You confirmed.

Mr. David Morrison: This is a journalist who's written extensively on this topic, a journalist who has various sources.

He asked me if that was one of the people, and I confirmed that it was.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Morrison.

That day, you can confirm, both Ms. Drouin and Mr. Morrison, that the Prime Minister did not release this information to the Canadian public, but it was released in The Washington Post.

Is that correct?

Mr. David Morrison: It was released in The Washington Post, yes. I'm just racking my memory for exactly what the Prime Minister said.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Ms. Drouin, you advise the Prime Minister on issues of national security and intelligence. You're the top adviser in Canada.

Is that correct?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: That's correct.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Did you advise him not to release that information publicly in Canada?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: We worked with the Prime Minister and the different ministers in terms of their public statements. I think this is what I can say. We advised and we reviewed what were going to be the Q and As and the public statement by the Prime Minister and the different ministers.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: I'm trying to understand why it is that The Washington Post received information when the commissioner, the Prime Minister, the public safety minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs did not provide that information to Canada. In fact, Canadians wouldn't know unless they were able to read The Washington Post. I just find it quite unfair to the Canadian public that details were released in advance to The Washington Post and confirmed, according to Mr. Morrison, to The Washington Post, but not provided to Canada. Don't you find that odd?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: As I said in my opening remarks, the reason that we offered a background interview to The Washington Post was, really, to make sure that our side of the story was clearly and widely spread, especially at the international level. That was the strategy behind the background interview we gave.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dancho.

We go now to Mr. Gaheer for six minutes, please.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

It was a short while ago that the RCMP announced they had evidence that agents of the Government of India are actively involved, here in Canada, in a network of criminal activity that includes homicide, extortion, organized crime and interference in our democratic process. It's a network of crime that could potentially mean the involvement of some of India's highest-ranking diplomats and politicians.

First of all, I deeply thank the law enforcement agencies for your work, for uncovering this and for taking the action to protect Canadians. As I say this, I have a deep recognition that.... I don't know whether you folks know quite what you've done. For many Canadians of Sikh heritage, your words confirm what they already knew and felt. For decades, in gurdwaras, in homes and behind closed doors, Sikhs knew that they were being watched, monitored and targeted. What you've done is legitimize their concerns with the evidence and investigation that you engaged in.

Every time there's new information that comes out or an announcement that happens, I'm asked by my colleagues, my family and members of the community, "How are you? How is the overall community doing?" There's always a deep sigh of relief that their plight is not being ignored and, in fact, is being heard and acted upon. I think all Canadians can appreciate that the potential link of the murder of a Sikh, and other crimes in Canada, to the Indian state strikes at the very heart of the security that a lot of Sikhs and members of other communities come to Canada to find. This is why I think your work is so critical, and I deeply thank you for that work.

Ms. Drouin, my first question is for you. A criminal who is jailed in a foreign jail, in India, who acts at the behest of the Indian government for basic immunity to carry out his operations, is, quite literally, the plot of several Bollywood movies that I watched while I was growing up, and it's funny to see that the Indian government takes its hints from Bollywood. This is an individual who's being kept in an Indian jail, and there's potential involvement of Indian ministers and diplomats. How far does our jurisdiction reach? What action can be taken against a Lawrence Bishnoi type of figure if the evidence actually shows that there is a connection all the way through?

• (1125)

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: Your question is a very interesting one in terms of the jurisdiction we may have when it comes to law enforcement elsewhere in the world. This is why, as I presented in my opening remarks, the co-operation mechanism, and for India to take accountability and to direct Bishnoi to stop his illegal criminal activities in Canada.... These things are essential. This is also why we want to use all the tools available to us, including diplomatic tools.

Maybe, Commissioner, you want to add to that.

Commr Michael Duheme: I could probably add something to that. I just want to mention that we still have significant ongoing files right now.

To your question, if the evidence supports the involvement of an individual overseas, there's always the possibility of laying charges on Canadian soil. Then you get into the extradition process and whatnot. If the individual is locked up for the next...I don't know how long he's locked up, that could be challenging, but it doesn't

mean we have to recuse ourselves from laying any criminal charges against the individual.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Maybe I can finish the plot line for that movie that the Indian government seems to want to make. When that eventual connection is made between government officials who are using criminals to carry out their targeted hits and their actions that they want to carry out, they usually paint that individual as a rogue agent, and so I assume, eventually, that is the information that's going to come up when this investigation comes out.

My other question is this. We know that the Conservative Party leader engaged in wilful blindness and that the Conservative Party said their leader could be briefed via a TRM, a threat reduction measure. Are you considering briefing him in that way, and can you explain the limitations of a TRM compared to the amount of information he could receive if he were to receive top secret security clearance?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: Thank you. I'll start, and then I will go to the director to complete the answer.

In terms of sharing information with different parties, the easiest way, for sure, is to be able to have a top secret conversation with leaders. That can help us manage the caucus if needed, and it is the simplest way. A threat reduction measure is a mechanism by which some information can be revealed—the essential and necessary information—in order to manage the threat.

I will let the director continue, but the TRM is not equivalent to disclosing TS information to a cleared individual.

Mr. Daniel Rogers (Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Thank you, Madame.

I can confirm what Nathalie said. Certainly, a TRM requires specific legal thresholds and allows us to provide a subset of information, and we will evaluate whether that's something we can do as we move ahead.

Without security clearance, at this point, CSIS can't provide a more fulsome brief on a broader set of topics.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gaheer.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud for six minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for being with us.

I have here in my hand the French version of the RCMP statement dated October 14, 2024. It starts by stating that an extraordinary situation is compelling the RCMP to disclose information about the investigation. It also mentions that it is not their normal process to disclose information about ongoing investigations to preserve their integrity.

I wonder why the RCMP decided to publicly disclose information in connection with the investigation. What did they discover by doing so?

I know that it's far too early to draw conclusions, but what is the difference between a confidential investigation and this one, where some details have been made public?

To some extent, you wanted to warn some Canadians that they might be in danger. Was the goal truly to protect those individuals or was it to try to gather more intelligence? Why decide to publicly disclose some information?

I'll ask Mr. Duheme to respond first.

Commr Michael Duheme: Mr. Chair, the priority of any police force is to ensure public safety.

• (1130)

You are correct, Ms. Michaud, in saying that it's an extraordinary situation. I've never seen a case like this before.

Let's look at the chronology of events following the announcement in June of Hardeep Singh Nijjar's murder. We held a press conference following the arrest of several individuals. We said we wanted to proceed with a separate and distinct investigation into the homicide of Mr. Nijjar. That investigation was looking into criminal activities in which the Government of India played a role.

Over the past year, we've seen a number of situations where people have been intimidated, murdered or harassed. On occasion, we've also had to issue duty to warn notices when we have information of threats deemed credible and imminent against an individual. We also have the obligation to meet that individual and warn them that their life is in danger.

There's been an escalation of events in connection with the investigation. Over the past week, it has become increasingly clear that diplomats and consular officials played a role in this matter. During its investigation, the RCMP took a rather unusual position to uphold public safety in light of what it portends for the future.

I want to come back to Ms. Drouin's opening remarks. We had proposed options. The RCMP looked for ways to reduce the public safety risk prior to the investigation.

Going to the media can sometimes create situations during the investigation. In this case, Deputy Commissioner Flynn tried to meet his Indian counterparts. He was denied a visa. Plan B was to go meet his counterpart at the Consulate of India in Washington in October. That request was also denied.

Consequently, we decided that Deputy Commissioner Flynn would join Ms. Drouin and Mr. Morrison in Singapore. During that meeting, Deputy Commissioner Flynn explained what evidence we had collected and the actions undertaken by the Government of In-

dia. In her opening remarks, Ms. Drouin mentioned that the desired outcome had not been achieved and that there was a leak in the Indian press following that meeting, which was not supposed to happen. We understood that there seemed to be no appetite for co-operating with Canada and the RCMP, hence the importance for us in moving forward.

I know that many people questioned why we chose October 14. That was a long weekend for me as well, but we deemed it essential to make that information public immediately. Ms. Drouin had to make a call on Monday, October 14 around 9:30 or 10:30 a.m., but it did not happen. We wanted to avoid misinformation, and that's why we decided to make two pieces of information public. First, we wanted to send the message that we are focused on public safety. We also wanted to advise community members that, if they wanted to meet with us, we would listen to what they had to say.

That's more or less the reasoning behind the decision to make some details public.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

I don't want to presume anything, but, clearly, all Canadian security agencies collaborated. It was not the RCMP alone; there was also collaboration, clearly, with the government.

Was there any pressure from the government to make a public statement, given how unusual it is for you to do so?

Without wanting to make this political, we know that the foreign interference scandal in Canada may not have restored Canada's image in this regard. The opposition parties had to push for an independent public inquiry on foreign interference.

I wonder, then, whether there wasn't pressure from the government to demonstrate that Canada and its security agencies are united and proactive and that they're working on that.

Is that true?

Commr Michael Duheme: There was no pressure. What's interesting here is that it was the RCMP that took it to the government, meaning that we sent the file to the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

We were in a position where the chances of laying charges against diplomats are often slim. We examined the alternatives to try to stop, so to speak, the threat and really focus on public safety. Ms. Drouin mentioned that earlier. Two months ago, we said we needed to put a plan in place.

The challenge was to find ways to put a stop to it. It was perhaps not advisable to use policing tools. There were other means available, such as expelling the six diplomats.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

Thank you, Mr. Duheme.

[English]

Mr. MacGregor, you have six minutes, please.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you to each of you for being here today and assisting our committee in investigating this issue.

Of course, the revelations of October 14 have to be taken in the context of what the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons, of the NSICOP report and of the Hogue commission's initial report, which all extensively mention India.

Ms. Drouin, I'd like to start with you.

Of course, a number of weeks ago, the Prime Minister was before the Hogue commission and made a pretty stunning allegation in naming Conservative Party parliamentarians who were under threat of foreign interference. He neglected to mention other parties, but I can only surmise that other parties are involved, given that both the Hogue commission and the NSICOP report made mention of other parties.

In the context of the Prime Minister's remarks, was the source country of that foreign interference India? Are you able to confirm that?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: I mean, if you look at all the public summaries that—

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I'm sorry. I'm just looking for a short answer.

Can you determine whether India was the source of the foreign interference, specifically in the context of the Prime Minister's remarks before the Hogue commission?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: I think I need to answer that if you look at all the public summaries that we have disclosed to the commission, you'll see that three main countries are doing foreign interference: China, Russia and India. We have others, but those are the three main countries.

India is active with all parties, including the Liberals, the Conservatives—

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I'm sorry. My time is short.

You understand the political climate we're operating in. What was the intention of the Prime Minister's remarks?

I mean, you must have known what the fallout would be from those remarks. I'm just trying to understand, because we're still wanting to know the names, but of course the names can't be released. I understand there's a wide gulf between evidence and intelligence.

What intention was that serving, given the political climate we're in right now?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: I'm here to talk to you about the facts. What I'm telling you is that India is a player when it comes to foreign interference. India can target all parties depending on their respective interests.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

Mr. Rogers, I'd like to turn to you.

Welcome to the committee, and congratulations on your appointment as director of CSIS.

Is it clear that a security clearance is not automatic for federal party leaders? They have to go through the same process that anyone would.

Can you confirm that?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you very much.

We are in a situation right now, with all of this that's going on, where Green Party leader Elizabeth May, BQ leader Yves Blanchet—I believe he is in the process of getting his clearance—and NDP leader Jagmeet Singh have all taken the steps necessary to get that security clearance to be fully briefed.

I want to understand, from your perspective as the director of CSIS, what the desired outcome is of having federal party leaders briefed. I understand they are under the obligations of the Foreign Interference and Security of Information Act, but what is the intention in having them briefed? What are the desired outcomes and actions that you are hoping for by having them briefed?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: Thank you for that question, and maybe Madame Drouin would like to add something.

From our perspective, the more knowledgeable party leaders are about the threat of foreign interference and some of the specifics that we've seen through our intelligence, the more they can be aware and the more they may be able to take appropriate actions within their own parties.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I'll let you finish, but you said “actions within their own parties”.

We've had complaints from the Conservative Party leader, saying that it's going to gag him, and he can't speak publicly about it. I think we all understand that.

In terms of actions—because I think this is the crux of the issue—what specific actions can a party leader take, without breaching the security of information act, that would give CSIS confidence that we're treating this as seriously as we should?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: I might say that part of those conversations we could have with party leaders is around particular types of intelligence that we might see. It's engaging in a dialogue with those leaders about what actions they feel they may be able to take and how we might be able to provide information or disclose information to help them take those actions. A dialogue on that would start that process.

I think there are actions that party leaders could take if we were aware of certain types of threats. That might involve looking at the way their party is operating. I don't want to speak to any hypothetical situations. I would say that a lot of that would be case-specific.

• (1140)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I appreciate that you don't want to speak in hypotheticals but, theoretically, given how much power a party leader has, I guess that could be steps such as keeping certain individuals away from certain parliamentary activities, and, maybe at the most extreme, preventing someone who might be completely compromised from running under the party's banner in the next election. Is that something that could be done?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: Again, I don't really want to speak to specifics. I think party leaders know their roles better than I do. I think our objective, from the perspective of the service, is to give them the information that we can to enable them to make good decisions.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Do you have anything to add to that? Mr. Rogers signalled to you.

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: I totally agree with that. I guess you know that leaders of parties can manage their party, their caucus members. That management authority gives them a series of tools in terms of responding to the intelligence we can share with them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

We go now to Ms. Dancho, please, for five minutes.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Drouin, you are the national security and intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister, so you take direction from him. Do you take direction from anyone else in his office—his chief of staff, for example?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: No, I do not.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Only from the Prime Minister.... Did the Prime Minister authorize you to leak this information to The Washington Post?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: The Prime Minister did not direct us in terms of the media strategy. It was a strategy that we developed at the civil servant level. The PMO and other MOs were aware of that mitigating strategy if India wished to not collaborate with us, but the Prime Minister did not direct us to do it, nor did they approve what was going to be shared with The Washington Post.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: As you said, they were aware that you were about to do it. Is that correct?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: The whole strategy has been shared with the Prime Minister and his office.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Did that include leaking the information to The Washington Post—

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: We did not leak information to The Washington Post.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: —I apologize—providing sensitive information to The Washington Post that you did not provide publicly to anyone else?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: We did not provide any classified information to The Washington Post.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Sensitive intelligence was provided to The Washington Post that was not provided to Canadian journalists. Is that correct?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: I think I have explained already what the purpose was of the conversation we had with The Washington Post, and the parameters of the conversation were discussed among ourselves.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: I appreciate that. It would seem like a leak because it wasn't provided to Canadian journalists and the Canadian public. In fact, the Canadian public would not be aware unless they read The Washington Post and subsequent Canadian reporting on what was included in The Washington Post. From my perspective, that certainly seems like a leak, and it certainly is concerning that it was done without the knowledge of Canadian officials who are reporting on this, Ms. Drouin, but I appreciate your perspective on that.

To the commissioner—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: I'd like to give my colleague the opportunity to respond.

[*English*]

Mr. David Morrison: Can I just address this same issue?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Sure.

Mr. David Morrison: Within our strategy we were talking to different audiences, so we deliberately chose, as Madame Drouin said in her introductory remarks, a credible internationally read newspaper that would carry our side of the story. We chose a journalist who has a long record of background in this particular issue—he had written on it a number of times before—and through The Washington Post we were speaking directly to our friends in the United States and the United Kingdom and elsewhere, and we were also speaking directly to Indians.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Morrison, just on that, then, the leak—or the non-leak—was an effort to get the Americans on board for the Canadian perspective. Was it an effort, then, in other words, to have American elected officials, those in the President's office, for example, read The Washington Post and be further compelled to back up Canada in this regard? Was that, in other words, in plain language, what the objective was?

Mr. David Morrison: What I would say is that we approached this whole series of events, including the approach that we adopted in going to Singapore.... We were talking to our closest allies, who share similar concerns, from the beginning.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Deputy Minister.

To the commissioner, in your original press release you mentioned that, in February 2024, the RCMP created a multidisciplinary team to investigate and coordinate efforts to combat this threat. Who initiated that multidisciplinary team, and who were the members of it? Were they beyond the RCMP? Did they include members at this table today, for example?

• (1145)

Commr Michael Duheme: There were two teams that we initiated. One was for all the extortions and harassment that we're seeing, predominantly in Alberta and in Vancouver, as well as in the greater Toronto area. We had a coordination team out of B.C. that was looking after that, but we also felt the need to put a team together to look at violent extremists and foreign interference, which involves several government departments that are part of this task force.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Who initiated that?

Commr Michael Duheme: I believe Deputy Commissioner Flynn initiated that.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Okay. There was not a direction from anyone at this table or in the Prime Minister's Office to engage in that.

Commr Michael Duheme: Oh, no.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Was that team central to the subsequent events we heard about over Thanksgiving?

Commr Michael Duheme: I would say that there were already independent investigations going on before this team was created. That was more to bring a whole-of-government approach to what we're seeing intelligence-wise on the criminal side.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: I have a few final seconds.

Was February 2024 the first time a whole-of-government approach was taken?

Commr Michael Duheme: It was, yes, of this size. Other than that, there's daily work with the service and other government departments on an ad hoc basis when required.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dancho.

We'll go now to Mr. Dhaliwal for five minutes.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As you know, Mr. Nijjar was my constituent. He was assassinated in a sovereign, religious place for the Sikhs. It was clearly an attack on Canadian sovereignty, as well as on Sikh sovereignty.

Mr. Rogers mentioned earlier that Pierre Poilievre will not do the whole clearance thing. What I'm hearing on the ground is that Mr. Pierre Poilievre is not doing the responsible thing and taking the clearance. Not only that, but we heard extensive calls for the Conservative Leader of the Opposition to do the responsible thing and get his clearance.

Can you explain to this committee why it would be the responsible thing for Mr. Pierre Poilievre to get the clearance?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: I would say that the responsibility of the service is to do everything it can to protect public safety and reduce the threat of foreign interference from India in Canada. From our perspective, if a leader chooses to take a clearance, we will provide the information I spoke about earlier. We will do everything we can to enable that information to be provided and to allow for the best decisions to be made in the interests of Canadians within that party. If a leader chooses not to get a clearance, we continue to evaluate other mechanisms available to us in order to help reduce that threat. This can include threat reduction measures or others.

If a leader chooses to have a clearance, we can have a broader conversation with them about the details of the threat and certain types of intelligence.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you.

You mentioned threats, particularly from India.

What are some of the specific indicators of foreign interference by India that CSIS identified, and what steps is CSIS taking to prevent foreign interference in Canadian political processes and protect Canadian citizens?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: It is a very good question.

Obviously, you heard earlier from the commissioner about some of the most egregious examples of criminality the RCMP has uncovered that have links to the Government of India. From a CSIS perspective, we could add some of the things we have been saying to the public recently, which is that the Government of India seeks to advance pro-India narratives and align Canada's position with the position of India.

This is particularly true when it comes to individuals whom India perceives as supporting a pro-Khalistan independence movement, which is a particular sore point for India. We see India using proxy agents here in Canada to try to advance those goals, and we see different types of foreign interference attempts, ranging from disinformation to criminal activities, which the RCMP mentioned, to achieve those goals.

Obviously, this is a concern for the service. As Madame Drouin said earlier, this is something we've been tackling for a number of years. We do investigations to try to uncover information. We use the information uncovered to work with our partners across the Government of Canada and with our allies. In an effort to protect public safety, if we see information that could be harmful to an individual in Canada, we work very closely with the police of jurisdiction and the RCMP, sharing that information through a robust framework. Where necessary, we can do things like use threat reduction measures.

The last thing I will say on that point is that we have, especially recently, engaged in a lot of stakeholder and community outreach to make sure we build resilience across various communities that could be threatened through foreign interference by India and others. Bill C-70 has helped us do that, with a new ability to do resilience disclosures with Canadians.

• (1150)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you.

This question is for Commissioner Duheme.

In a recent CTV News article, you are quoted as saying, "There has been a significant reduction in [public safety] threats" since the six Indian diplomats were expelled from the country.

What are some of the specific indicators that led to the assessment that there has been a significant reduction in public safety threats?

Commr Michael Duheme: I mentioned earlier that, throughout a period of a year or a year and a half, it ebbed and flowed from significant to imminent. That's when we did the "duty to warn". However, the actions taken on October 14, our press release and Global Affairs Canada's position on the six diplomats.... We know through current investigations we have in place that we've had a significant impact on the threat to public safety among those communities.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: How is the RCMP engaging with the communities to address concerns about the threats that India poses to particular communities?

Commr Michael Duheme: We encourage people to.... We do have an engagement strategy. We have individuals who will reach out to the community. Sometimes we will also work with the police of jurisdiction and the liaison people in these communities. It's to build that trust and those relationships, so people feel comfortable coming forward, explaining what they went through or what they have witnessed.

It was also part of the reason for going public. It's to get that trust from the community, to show that we're there and that we're putting actions in place to increase public safety. However, if they see anything, we ask them to come forward.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dhaliwal.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Duheme, you said earlier that the investigation allowed you to discover, to some extent, India's modus operandi. As a result of that information, were you able to more effectively predict what was going to happen?

Let me explain. Sometimes, there is no collaboration. In this case, that's obviously what happened. Canada does not have the co-operation of the Government of India.

Does that kind of information allow you to move the investigation forward, even without the Government of India's co-operation?

Commr Michael Duheme: I'd like to clarify two points. What we saw here, in Canada, is nothing new. For example, the United States filed charges against two individuals, an official representative of the Government of India and a person with ties to organized crime. The situation is similar to what we saw here in Canada. An American citizen was given a contract to murder another person. It shows how the Government of India operates. Undoubtedly, we have a better understanding of how information and orders flow from the Government of India to here.

The fact that we were able to gather enough evidence to convince the Canadian government to expel six Indian diplomats says a lot about the work we accomplished.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Ms. Drouin said that, initially, one of the options was to waive the diplomatic immunity of those individ-

uals before expelling them. Obviously neither you nor I can do that. It's actually the country that those diplomats represent which has the power to decide whether to waive diplomatic immunity.

Did the fact that you were not able to proceed with those arrests hinder you? Is it simply preferable to expel such individuals? In your opinion, which is the better option?

Ms. Drouin, do you wish to comment?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: Thank you.

Diplomats obviously enjoy immunity, and that makes the work of the investigative team so much harder. That's why the first option was to ask India to waive the immunity of those diplomats so that they could be subject to Canadian law.

Quite honestly, we didn't expect India to agree to that. That's why we chose to include the accountability option so that India would stop orchestrating violent crimes in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

[*English*]

We'll now go to Mr. MacGregor, please, for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

For my next series of questions, I'll turn to you, Mr. Morrison, and maybe to you, Mr. Rogers, as a follow-up.

With all of the revelations that have been made over the past year or so concerning the Government of India's interference.... We heard earlier what India's strategic objectives are in Canada. I guess it's to have a more pro-India stance in Canada. In the short term, that seems to have backfired spectacularly, given the negative news that is now cycling through Canada.

Mr. Morrison, is the department satisfied with the response to this by Canada's allies? Do we feel that we're getting sufficient backup and confirmation of our concerns from some of our closest allies about these very strong allegations?

We are basically accusing the Indian government of working hand in hand with serious criminal organizations involved in everything from murder to extortion and coercion.

Are you satisfied that our allies are in lockstep with us on this approach to the Government of India?

• (1155)

Mr. David Morrison: I am absolutely satisfied that our allies are advocating on our behalf. You have seen the public statements. We know for a fact that they have been advocating privately with our counterparts in India.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Rogers, I will turn to you, because Canada belongs to an exclusive club, the Five Eyes, and there are some fantastic relations and great intelligence sharing.

Have your counterparts in the other four countries been able to confirm an increase in India's activities in their respective countries? Is this a concern shared by your four counterparts, to whatever degree, in their home countries?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: Obviously, I can't speak to the specifics of what other countries have seen from an intelligence perspective. I can say, similar to what Mr. Morrison said, that we enjoy extremely strong relationships with our Five Eyes partners and more broadly across the world. We speak about this issue of foreign interference increasingly, including around India, within our service and within others like the CSE and other government partners.

Foreign interference as a topic on the whole, by India and others, forms more a part of those conversations, and I expect that to continue, especially in light of these revelations.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

We go back now to Ms. Dancho. You have five minutes.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Commissioner, in February 2024 you created this multidisciplinary team. You said it brought people together to work on this issue. Are they folks at this table?

Who outside the RCMP was engaged in this at that time?

Commr Michael Duheme: You would have some of the normal partners that we have, including CSIS, the CSE, the CBSA, FINTRAC, the IRCC, the RCMP—multiple sections within the RCMP—and, obviously, the police of jurisdiction when we look at the extortion cases in Alberta, Toronto and B.C.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Is Global Affairs included in that?

Commr Michael Duheme: I don't think so. This was more on a... I have others at the DOJ and GAC, but most of them are all the practitioners, I'd say, when it comes to law enforcement or security mandates.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Okay.

It's my understanding from this testimony and other testimony that about eight weeks before this announcement on October 14, the RCMP came together with the other officials at this table. Is that correct?

Commr Michael Duheme: No. In the sense of what Mr. Morrison said, it was about eight weeks from when we started planning on the diplomatic side, but there have been regular briefings to inform the speed and flow of the investigation.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Ms. Drouin mentioned that there was diplomatic outreach to India in November 2023. That was the first event of its kind. Is that correct, Ms. Drouin? Can you correct me? You said it in your opening statement.

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: It is important to remember that back then, in August 2023, we were talking about the Nijjar murder, while what we have talked about since Thanksgiving is broader cases of violence in Canada.

Regarding the Nijjar murder, we started our diplomatic outreach with India in August 2023. That was prior to the Prime Minister's statement. As I testified, we had many other meetings with them.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Did you have other conversations with the Prime Minister following his statement in the House of Commons on September 18 and in the few weeks leading up to October 14 this year?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: As the commissioner and the deputy commissioner offered, and as I said in my opening remarks, there were several updates on this file to me and the Prime Minister over the last year.

• (1200)

Ms. Raquel Dancho: I'm trying to understand. We had this unprecedented event, when the Prime Minister stood in the House of Commons and made this quite extraordinary claim that India was responsible for the murder of a Canadian. On October 14, 2024—11 months later—we saw quite a phenomenal escalation of the concern to those in Canada, Canadian citizens and others from India.

From an outsider's perspective, there was that statement made in the House of Commons, and then things got extraordinarily worse, despite the number of efforts you have outlined you made in that time.

I'm trying to understand where the failure was to stop this. Perhaps you can shed some light on that, Ms. Drouin. Why were all these efforts that you've said were done not successful? It got to a point that 13 individuals were in peril 11 months later.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: The commissioner said it and I'll repeat it: There have been investigations into violence against Indo-Canadians on Canadian soil for several years now.

You are quite right in saying that there's been an escalation of violence since August 2023. That's precisely what led the RCMP to hold discussions with Global Affairs Canada so we could look at all the tools available to stop that network from propagating violence.

The first step was to completely prevent the network from collecting information needed to commit acts of violence.

[English]

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Ms. Drouin.

Just with my concluding few moments, it seems like it took prompting from the RCMP for Global Affairs and yourself to really insist on this quite unprecedented diplomatic action to expel six diplomats. Why did it take the RCMP initiating those conversations to get it to such a point?

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: I could clarify something. In 2023, we were operating on the basis of credible information concerning India's involvement in Mr. Nijjar's murder.

The information that's been made public over the past two weeks is the result of thorough investigations. I think it's important to make that distinction. The hard work of multidisciplinary teams, led by the commissioner and deputy commissioner, allowed us to expose that plot. They determined that the investigations needed to continue, but simultaneously, the necessary steps had to be followed to stop the network inciting the violence.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dancho.

I'll go now to Mr. Sarai.

Mr. Sarai, please, you have five minutes.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank you all for your very professional and thorough role in uncovering the egregious breach of Canadian sovereignty and safety of Canadians by India. It's also very sad to see that my colleagues from the Conservative Party have not asked one question, not one question, in the House or in here, or in the press, on India's involvement in these crimes. It's all been about your role in sharing information with The Washington Post to counter disinformation. This is while this is the greatest threat to Canadian sovereignty that we have faced in at least my generation. This is sad and goes beneath my lowest expectation of the Conservative Party of Canada.

Every Canadian, including Canadians of Sikh heritage and of South Asian heritage, deserves better. It has just been heard that India has a very pro-India agenda that it wants to implement in Canada, and a leader who is said to have received support from India prefers silence, not to see the evidence, rather than address the issue, the threat, that is facing our democracy. I'll let Canadians figure out the correlation between the three.

My first question is for you, Mr. Duheme, or Mr. Rogers can answer.

Have you seen evidence of any other democratic country that has gathered information on Canadians, passed it up to its capital, then given the information to organized crime to conduct such heinous crimes as murder, extortion and shootings in Canada?

• (1205)

Commr Michael Duheme: Mr. Chair, I will limit my comments to the fact that we do have ongoing foreign interference investigations. Considering that they are ongoing, I'm not going to comment on that. However, going back to the India side, we did see the indictment of two Indians in India on a planned murder of a U.S. citi-

zen. That dictates that other countries are probably going through what we're going through with the same modus operandi.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: What I'm asking is this: Have any other countries used that modus operandi on Canadians that we've seen in the past, that we're publicly aware of, to this degree that includes murder and extortion?

Commr Michael Duheme: I would say not to that extent.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Have any of your actions been political or politically motivated?

Commr Michael Duheme: Not at all. As I mentioned earlier, this is an RCMP-led investigation, and we actually brought it to the attention of the government.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Has the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, Pierre Poilievre, ever contacted you, Mr. Duheme, or your department, or Mr. Rogers, or Ms. Drouin, for a briefing on the transnational aggression by India against Canadian citizens?

Commr Michael Duheme: Not my office.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Ms. Drouin.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: If I may, I'd like to say that, along with my colleagues here, I had the opportunity to give a briefing to all the opposition leaders on the situation being discussed here.

[English]

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Has he contacted you for a separate briefing?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: No, it's we who have offered to all leaders individual briefings on this actual situation.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Daniel Rogers: I'm not aware of any such recent request, although I will say I've just joined the service and have been here for a day.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: What are you doing to prevent proxies from working in Canada for the Government of India or other countries?

In terms of preventing them from continuing to do this, are there charges, deportations or protections in the case of their being threatened or coerced to provide information? What tools are being used for that?

I'm looking for whatever you can disclose, obviously, since it's ongoing.

Commr Michael Duheme: One of the main tools is engagement with the communities and having people come forward. That's one of the main ones for us. We want people to have confidence in law enforcement and to come forward if they witness it or hear it. We also have a 1-800 line where people can report, and we work very closely with the service and other partners to make sure we're in lockstep when it comes to intelligence and threats to the Canadian people.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: You have stated that the way they gather information is through these proxies. I would consider that a criminal activity if you're going against Canadians and providing information for the purposes of criminal activity.

I'm asking what measures are being used to prevent other proxies or the current proxies from doing this.

Commr Michael Duheme: One's an awareness. I will admit that we've been using two terms: agents and proxies. The definitions we've been using are that an agent would be the organized crime group that's doing the work on behalf of consular officials and the Government of India, and proxies are more people within the community who are sometimes recruited and, sometimes, probably being engaged without even knowing it. It's doing a simple task—"Did you see that person?" or "What's the address of the person's residence?"—but without even knowing it. Some could have been coerced into doing it because of threats to their family or to their lives.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sarai.

We'll start our third round now with Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Lloyd, please go ahead for five minutes.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll start with Commissioner Duheme.

Were any of the alleged killers of Mr. Nijjar known to the RCMP before the killings took place in that investigation?

Commr Michael Duheme: The Nijjar case is right now before the courts, so I'm not going to make any comments on the Nijjar file. Disclosure will happen in due course through the judicial process.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: It's been publicly reported that the four alleged killers, Amandeep Singh, Karan Brar, Karanpreet Singh and Kamalpreet Singh, were all temporary residents.

Is that the case?

Commr Michael Duheme: I would have to go back in my notes to confirm that these were all temporary residents. I couldn't answer that.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: It was reported in the news.

Can any of the other witnesses comment on that?

This has been publicly reported in the Toronto Sun.

Was nobody at our RCMP services aware of any criminal background of these characters before they were allowed to come to Canada?

• (1210)

Commr Michael Duheme: I'm not saying that nobody was aware. What I'm saying is the matter is before the courts, and I'm not going to comment on it.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: This has nothing to do with the current investigation, Commissioner. It concerns whether or not our country is prepared to protect our national security. That's what we're talking about today. If people with criminal backgrounds are coming to our

country and are being allowed to come to our country through the temporary resident program and, possibly, through the international student program, that's a serious breach of our national security. That's our immigration system after nine years of this Liberal government.

In the case of Amandeep Singh, who has been accused of killing Mr. Nijjar, were you aware that Amandeep Singh was on bail when the killing of Mr. Nijjar took place?

Commr Michael Duheme: Again, I'd have to go through my notes from the briefing, because it happened quite some time ago and a lot of things have happened since then.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I guess I will enlighten the committee.

As was reported in the Toronto Sun, there was a March 2023 warrant for fleeing police and the dangerous operation of a motor vehicle in Surrey, B.C., last November. He was pinched on firearms and drug charges in Brampton. He was out on bail at the time of the Peel Region incident. He agreed in Surrey that he wouldn't possess firearms or ammo or get behind the wheel of a car. He made his first court appearance on June 16, 2023. Two days later, and this is according to the Toronto Sun, Sikh Canadian activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar was killed.

Why are these dangerous criminals, who are here as temporary residents and possibly as international students—I don't know what educational institution they're attending—allowed to be out on bail?

If we're watching these people, we know they're a threat to national security. Why are they here? Why are they allowed to be out on bail? Why are they allowed to walk Canadian streets?

Commr Michael Duheme: The answer to that is, one, questions on the process of providing them visas or access to entry into Canada would be best posed to IRCC. If people are released on bail before the courts, that has nothing to do with the RCMP. It's a judicial process that we operate within.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I just think that Canadians would be somewhat concerned. We have many of the lead figures from our national security establishment. There doesn't appear to be any sort of coordination between immigration Canada and our security services.

I'm not getting a lot of confidence today that our national security is being protected in this country under this government, when it appears that our immigration system has been compromised in this case and when it appears that our justice system is being compromised. These accused killers are being allowed to walk on the street and go after Canadian citizens—particularly Canadian citizens of Sikh background. That's deeply concerning to me.

I think that should be a major focus of what this investigation is: What processes did our country have that could have prevented this?

Yes, we can talk about briefing foreign media outlets in order to get this information out. We can talk about the fact that the Prime Minister had information on this, but if we're not fixing our systems, like our immigration system and our justice system, it's going to allow these very dangerous criminals to walk our streets.

Commissioner Duheme, how long have you been investigating Indian foreign interference on Canadian soil?

Commr Michael Duheme: I wouldn't be able to provide the committee with an exact date.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: It just seems to me that this has become an issue very recently. I suspect it has been a long-time issue, but it really seems to have come to a boil in the last few years.

Can you tell this committee why this has become an issue in the last few years? It seems to have become a big issue.

Commr Michael Duheme: The whole question goes back to when the former director of CSIS, David Vigneault, brought to the forefront the immediate risk to Canadians from ideologically motivated violent extremists. That was pretty new to us, because it wasn't on the radar.

I would say that foreign interference, although it was probably happening way before it came to the forefront as it has right now, is a phenomenon that we've learned over the years. It's present more now than what we've seen before because there's probably more intelligence and work being done.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I want to clarify that I'm not saying this has never been an issue and only became an issue recently. This has obviously been a serious issue.

Thank you for that.

The Chair: Thank you.

We seem to have bells. Let's find out what's going on with the bells.

While we're finding out, we'll go to Ms. Damoff for five minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you.

I want to start by sincerely thanking all of you and the people who work with you for the work that you've done on this. It was a shock for me to see just how pervasive this issue was in Canada and how Canadian lives were being put at risk, so I sincerely thank all of you for the work that you've done.

Quickly, before I get to some of the questions I had, Ms. Drouin, you looked like you wanted to say something during the previous question.

I just wondered if you could respond, please.

● (1215)

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity.

I just want to say that we take the immigration security screening very seriously. It's a process that involves IRCC, CBSA, CSIS and the RCMP. Yes, as in any other field, there's always room for improvement, but it is not something that we are not taking seriously.

I also need to say that we cannot take for granted that those individuals came to Canada with criminal backgrounds. Maybe it is sometimes the situation, but we cannot take for granted that it is always the situation.

Doing a good screening also involves having a very good partnership and relation with the country of origin, as we need to also rely on their information.

That is the information that I wanted to share. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Ms. Pam Damoff: That's okay.

Would you rely on a police record check from India in doing screening?

I would think that there may be security concerns with doing that.

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: We never 100% rely on that, for sure, but it is an important input. We need to also do our separate monitoring—

Ms. Pam Damoff: That's probably better directed at the IRCC.

Commissioner Duheme, I have a question for you.

You mentioned that the RCMP brought this issue to the government. I wonder if you could just quickly clear this up. There have been allegations that the Prime Minister directed you to go public on Thanksgiving Monday.

Was that the case?

Commr Michael Duheme: No, it wasn't the case. I've shared earlier that we never actually pinpointed October 14 as the date.

We knew that we wanted to come proactively, but when you look at the efforts that Madame Drouin and Mr. Morrison took in Singapore, the lack of engagement by Indian officials with our Deputy Commissioner Flynn, the leaks to the media and the fact that they didn't want to talk to us on Monday, October 14, we said that there was no sense in delaying this and we should go out right away to inform the Canadian public.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Our study is looking at misinformation and disinformation that's being put out by the Government of India. I'm not sure who is best placed to answer this. Maybe it's CSIS, but I'll let you decide.

Can you talk about the disinformation campaign that's going on now, and the impact it can have on Canadians because of the information that it's putting out.

Ms. Tricia Geddes (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Allow me to start.

Obviously, disinformation is a really important issue, and not just from a state like India. There are a number of states that we are concerned about regarding how disinformation and misinformation might be affecting Canadians.

Colleagues will be aware that we have established a counter foreign interference coordinator at Public Safety. In addition, some of my colleagues spoke earlier about engagement and outreach being a really core component of that. It's also understanding misinformation and disinformation and deliberating on how we can best provide information to Canadians that counteracts that disinformation and misinformation, identifies it, and calls it out when we see it happening. This is an area of significant effort on behalf of Public Safety right now.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

Chair, I would like to read this notice of motion, and I don't want to do anything with it today. It states:

That the committee summon Liam Donovan and Lauren Southern to testify on their own for no less than two hours on their participation in Russian-backed interference and far-right disinformation campaigns intended to manipulate the Canadian public, and that they appear before Friday, November 29, 2024.

I'm just giving notice of that today.

I have only 30 seconds left. Ms. Drouin, would you be able to give us some examples of the type of disinformation that India is engaged in on this particular issue?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: I will go back to what I have said before. India says that we have not shared any evidence with it. It also spreads the idea that the reason we have violence in Canada is that we are not taking extreme violence seriously.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

Thanks, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going now to Madame Michaud.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

According to the special report on foreign interference by the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, after the People's Republic of China, "...India emerged as the second-most significant foreign interference threat to Canada's democratic institutions and processes."

The report goes on to state:

While India's foreign interference efforts have slowly increased, it became clear...that its efforts had extended beyond countering what it perceived as pro-Khalistani efforts in Canada to include interfering in Canadian democratic processes and institutions, including through the targeting of Canadian politicians, ethnic media and Indo-Canadian ethnocultural communities.

Mr. Duheme, you said that when you realize the evidence gathered indicates that the life of an individual living on Canadian soil is in danger, you need to meet with that individual.

What kind of protection can we provide that individual? Is the RCMP authorized to provide protection to those people?

That leads me to another question.

Do you only meet with individuals whose lives are in danger? Do you also meet with individuals suspected of being involved in foreign interference activities?

It's often said that people could have been involved in foreign interference activities without realizing it. Politicians, in particular, are mentioned. I'm thinking of a context where a politician on a parliamentary mission abroad goes for a drink with a colleague from another country and communicates information about Canada to that colleague without realizing that it's privileged information, for example.

In that case, do you meet with individuals suspected of having collaborated with India, for example, or do you only meet with individuals whose lives might be in danger?

There's a debate about the names of those involved, about whom the Prime Ministerspoke. The Leader of the Opposition does not want to get his security clearance to warn those who might be involved in foreign interference activities. Could the leader of the official opposition warn them, or could you do it?

I apologize if my question is a bit long.

Commr Michael Duheme: I'm going to start by responding to the question concerning the duty to warn people when their lives are in danger.

The role of the RCMP isn't necessarily to provide these people with protection, but rather to make them aware of the threat. I come back to the idea that the threat is imminent and credible. We're going to make some suggestions. For example, we might suggest that those individuals vary their daily routine. We might also provide them with some cybersecurity tips, if necessary. There is no one-size-fits-all approach here. However, we're trying to make people aware that they need to change their routines.

In response to the second part of the question, I'd say that it would be better to ask CSIS. As you just said, the RCMP will commit to intervening in foreign interference when a crime is committed. As to whether we can disclose information indicating that person x and person y met, for example, I believe that CSIS would be best placed to implement mitigation measures or meet with the individuals in question.

If there's any time remaining, I would ask Mr. Rogers to provide more clarification.

Mr. Daniel Rogers: CSIS can hold that kind of meeting to advise individuals who might be victims of foreign interference.

[English]

We do that and have done it many times over the last number of years. I will also just add to what the commissioner said. We've done that with partners and community groups, not just individuals. Where we see there might be groups of individuals who could be the target of a particular government's foreign interference strategy, with Public Safety Canada, the RCMP and others, we can engage them.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

Commr Michael Duheme: The person initiating the discussion or the Canadian elected official, if you will, isn't always aware. CSIS or intelligence teams sometimes have a more global view of that strategy. That's why it's important to advise people where possible.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

We'll go now to Mr. MacGregor for two and a half minutes, please.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll turn a question to the Department of Public Safety, because the RCMP, CBSA and CSIS all operate under your ministry's wheelhouse.

This committee has been looking at the previous issue of how a couple of Egyptian nationals were able to come into Canada. There was that foiled plot in Toronto, which was thankfully stopped before it could be executed. We now have a situation in which a foreign government is actively collaborating with a criminal element named the Bishnoi gang.

I know your department is still doing some internal investigations into how IRCC and the CBSA coordinated and what went wrong, but what are some of the added challenges when a foreign government is working in criminal activity? Does that inform how your department has to look at some of the people who might be coming from India?

We don't want to put anyone under the spotlight, but we have previous experience whereby someone got in who shouldn't have been here. I'm just wondering if you can comment on that.

• (1225)

Ms. Tricia Geddes: If the question is whether we are in a process of continuous review and understanding how these threats need to be properly identified through a security screening process, the short answer is yes.

You properly referenced that we and IRCC are engaged in a "lessons learned" exercise to ensure that we have a really good understanding of some recent cases. Part of that process, though, will involve looking at other recent cases and other threat actors, and how we can ensure—while no system is ever going to be perfect—that the system is as robust as it possibly can be. We're engaged in that process right now.

I wouldn't say it's new. This is continuous engagement we're undertaking with IRCC and, as you pointed out, all of the agencies that report to the Department of Public Safety.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Very quickly, Commissioner Duheme, from the RCMP's perspective, a lot of collaboration is required among various police forces around the world. What are some of the added challenges you're now experiencing with the involvement of the Bishnoi gang?

Commr Michael Duheme: We had good working relationships with the Indian National Investigation Agency. It was actually here in Canada over the years to understand our judicial process, and we sent a team over there. Obviously, with what happened, we have to rebuild those relationships because we have things in common.

When I think of violent extremists, they're not only here in Canada but also in India. There are common interests there, and we want to renew those relationships so that we can work together for a common cause.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

We'll go now to Mr. Motz for five minutes.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you very much for being here, witnesses.

Commissioner, I specifically want to thank you for the work you and your members have done on this file. You didn't give it up 11 months ago and longer. Thank you for the work you've done to bring this as far as you have. I wish you the best in continuing to work on it.

I have a question. When you're dealing with sensitive national security information—this is not necessarily for you, Commissioner; maybe this is more for Ms. Drouin—who can declassify that? Who has the authority to do that?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: The owner of the intelligence products. For example, let's say you have something that has been published or released—

Mr. Glen Motz: Okay. That's all I need. That's the standard in the intel world. The owner can release it.

Now, you are a consumer of that. You don't create your own intel. As the national security and intelligence adviser to the PM, you're the consumer of intelligence. Is that right?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: That's right.

Mr. Glen Motz: Who do you get to authorize the release? You don't call it sensitive or classified information, but I read the National Post article. I'll tell you what: That's pretty sensitive information. It's pretty classified information.

Someone above you, the owner of that intel, had to give you authority to release it to The Washington Post, did they not?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: As I said many times, we have not shared classified information with journalists. I can add that what we discussed with the journalist was exactly what we told all your leaders when we briefed them.

Mr. Glen Motz: Is that including Mr. Poilievre?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: Yes, that includes Mr. Poilievre.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you.

I don't want to play semantics, but I would consider that some of the information you gave would not normally have been made public under different circumstances. Commissioner Duheme has made that very clear. It could impact the criminal investigation and jeopardize the lives of many individuals.

Commissioner, you stated very recently—I don't know the exact time, but within the last week or so—that you would have concerns if the six diplomats were to be replaced. Does that remain your position?

Commr Michael Duheme: Yes, my comment was that I have concerns considering how the Government of India operates, but I also shared in that same interview that I'm not familiar with the background process that's in place when a diplomat or consular official is appointed to a country.

Perhaps Mr. Morrison would be better placed to explain the checks on the security side.

• (1230)

Mr. Glen Motz: I'm just going to ask you, Mr. Morrison, do you share those same concerns? What does that look like for Global Affairs?

Mr. David Morrison: We will continue to let the dust settle, and there's a lot of dust. We will work with our counterparts to ensure that both sides have adequate representation in each other's countries.

There's a process of screening when a country applies to accredit its diplomats. We work, as Global Affairs Canada, with the security agencies to ensure there's no adverse information. Assuming that's the case, then we accredit new diplomats.

Mr. Glen Motz: Quickly, Commissioner, you mentioned here just a couple of minutes ago that it is reasonable to assume, and in fact it's occurring, that India also experiences violent extremism, just differently from what we experience here. You indicated that's a reality.

Now, is it possible that criminals from Canada are giving direction to operatives in India, just like it's alleged to be vice-versa to Canada?

Commr Michael Duheme: After coming out on October 14, anything's possible. We can't discount that, but that's the importance of working with our colleagues in India, so we can work together to address the people who are involved.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Motz.

We'll go now to Ms. O'Connell for five minutes, please.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have to say that I'm quite concerned. Following my colleague Mr. Sarai's comments, we're just over an hour and a half into testimony. There have been about five rounds of questions for the Conservatives, and I think at least three of those rounds were focused on information that was given as background to the media and confirming that the information was not classified. We know this by

the sheer fact that their own leader received the same information, and we all know he doesn't have a security clearance. Information that was provided to all leaders was also provided to the media, and Conservatives have spent at least three of their rounds on that issue—information that their party already had.

Then there's what we just heard from Mr. Motz. Instead of to Mr. Sarai's point about the very real threat to community members—I can only imagine how it felt and feels to hear these reports—Conservatives just went around asking about Canadian criminals in India. Not a single question was about the fact that the Indian government worked with organized crime—this is what is being alleged in the media—to target Canadians with violence. There's a murder investigation. There are other investigations ongoing, and there was not a single question from the Conservative Party about how that might impact our community here in Canada. In terms of asking about Canadian criminals abroad, I would think Canadians across this country, in particular in the Sikh community, the Indo-Canadian community, must find very cold comfort in what we just saw. I don't know how to continue to not call that out for what it is. I just think that Canadians deserve better.

I thank all of you for being here to try to shed some light on this.

We have our top security officials here for almost two hours, and that's the quality of question we had. I have to look at it from the community's perspective, and I'm quite disappointed that that's how the time was spent. It is for Conservatives to answer to constituents across this country as to why they would rather not call out the alleged actions of the Indian government, which have been widely reported.

With that being said, I want to speak to Madame Drouin. In terms of the sharing of that information with media, you mentioned something that was not brought up in the three panels of questions obsessing over that instead of over the safety of Canadians. It's the fact that those reporters and the journalists had other sources, and that, had Canadian representatives and officials not responded with the Canadian side of things, there was an understanding that they were dealing with a lot of misinformation that would have been left unchecked. Was it part of the strategy to ensure that information the Conservative Party already had was also shared with journalists, to make sure that misinformation wouldn't go unchecked?

• (1235)

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: You're right that the strategy of using an international media outlet was to make sure that, based on what I said earlier, misinformation from India, repeating that Canadian media are part of the Canadian strategy using the India violence as a political means to achieve our goals.... The idea of using media, an international media outlet, was to make sure that the information would be spread widely and that our side of the story would be brought correctly.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

Commissioner Duheme or anyone else who would like to comment on the question about the Indian government—my colleague Mr. Gaheer spoke about the reference to a Bollywood plot—and the idea that perhaps the Indian government was using organized criminals within their country, within even their own criminal justice systems.... Canada would not have been able to reach in, and, let's say, arrest that individual to disrupt that.

Was part of the reason for coming forward publicly to disrupt these sorts of serious allegations and actions in areas in which the police in Canada could not, in a traditional sense, go and follow where the investigation leads to pick up an individual or a criminal who may not be within our borders?

The Chair: Can you give a quick answer, please?

Commr Michael Duheme: The number one priority for us was public safety.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

We'll start our fourth round with Mr. Shipley.

You have five minutes, please.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*] I lost track. It was maybe four, five or six times—

A voice: It was nine times.

Mr. Doug Shipley: It was nine times—my friend was keeping track—in her opening question, so I think the people who are being overly partisan are perhaps on the other side of the table today.

Anyway, we have a serious issue ahead of us. They can smirk, and they can laugh, but let's get into some of the questions here.

First, to Mr. Morrison and Ms. Drouin, an NSICOP report from 2019 stated:

CSIS observed an increase in Indian threat related activity targeting the Indo-Canadian diaspora [and] government institutions.

This same NSICOP report found:

Indian consular officials are maintaining “black lists” of dissidents, controlling travel visas to India...and recruiting community sources that are “engaging MPs and political candidates to advance Indian objectives.”

Given that each of your organizations presumably read this report at the time and knew about these activities, dating back to at least 2019, that very clearly fall outside the norm of diplomatic activity, why did the government wait until these threats had escalated to the point of violence and murder to expel any consular officials?

Mr. David Morrison: I think, as Nathalie said and as has been testified to today, various parts of the government have been live to the issue of foreign interference for a number of years and have been taking all kinds of measures. When the situation reached its apex, as has been described and as the RCMP has said, when they came to us and sought our help, we then used one of our heaviest diplomatic tools, which was the *persona non grata* tool.

I wouldn't assume that Indian foreign interference was not a constant subject of discussion throughout that time period of 2019 until the present, in all our interactions with India.

• (1240)

Mr. Doug Shipley: Ms. Drouin, would you like to comment?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: I'd like to add that India is also a priority in terms of the work CSIS is doing. As for the resources we deploy to identify the different plots, India is one of the countries to which we are paying more attention.

[*English*]

Mr. Doug Shipley: Thank you.

Mr. Duheme, thank you for being here today. Through a lot of the reports we've read and a lot of the indications, a lot of this crime that we're talking about going on here is being funnelled through organized crime groups that are here in Canada. What have we done, or what have you or your group or the government done, to disrupt the communication lines between organized crime groups and the Indian government, to ensure that this doesn't continue?

Commr Michael Duheme: Coming out publicly was one of the strategies we used to ensure that the message is out, that the community is aware, and that they will report it. It's making sure that people from the community do not fall victim to influence and whatnot. It's continuing to work with our government departments in terms of maintaining...not oversight, but a view of what's going on in Canada with regard to the Government of India's influence on criminal activities in Canada.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Thank you for that.

I have a quick question. I've really been intrigued today by Mr. Morrison and Ms. Drouin.

I'm going to quote your words back to both of you. You have both said that you decided to go to The Washington Post to make sure you went to a “respected” and “credible” newspaper. By that, do you mean there are no respected or credible newspapers in Canada?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: I think we said “international” outlet, sir, and this is a very important—

Mr. Doug Shipley: Well, you did say you wanted to go to a respected and credible news source, and you used The Washington Post.

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: I said it was international. I think I explained that. That has nothing to do.... It's quite the contrary.

I also said in my opening remarks that the pretensions of India are not right. They pretend that our India file is politically motivated and that our media are into that scheme too. This is why we used an international outlet. We knew that those allegations from India would resurface. That was the nexus and the reason to go with an international outlet.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shipley.

We'll go now to Mr. Dhaliwal for five minutes, please.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Over the past many weeks, my constituents have come to me. In fact, they have appreciated the leadership of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. They also thanked RCMP Commissioner Duheme, Mr. Rogers and the work that CSIS has done. The community feels at ease.

On the other hand, they keep on complaining to me about the Conservatives and their leader. Even today, I can see their line of questioning is not focusing on the perpetrators of crime, who are the agents of India. In fact, they are questioning you and all of those media things.

I'm coming back to Mr. Rogers here. I just need more clarification.

I just want to clarify an earlier point, which is that the Leader of the Opposition still needs a security clearance in order to read the NSICOP report and to learn about his own leadership race, because a lot of allegations are coming that agents of India were involved in installing him as leader of the Conservative Party.

Would he need a security clearance to know all of that? Can you elaborate on that, please?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: I have to refrain from speaking to the specifics of any intelligence, so I have to go back to what I've said before, which is that we will be able to describe more and broader sets of intelligence to people with a security clearance.

In cases where that clearance is not available, we will look at the other mechanisms available to us, which might include things like threat reduction measures or other types of information briefings—defensive briefings or other briefings—to help reduce the threat that would apply with any opposition leader or any Canadian.

• (1245)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Basically, on the other side, the Leader of the Opposition says that it's going to be gag orders from whomever.

Would it make sense, as a responsible leader, to take that clearance and get all of that information, so that leader is better placed to protect or play a role in protecting Canadians?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: What I would say is that we at the service will be able to brief more to those who have a security clearance. Madame Drouin and others may speak to this also, because classified information doesn't uniquely come from the service. There is CSE and there are other agencies across government.

I think I have to leave it at that.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madame Drouin, do you want to add something?

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: No, that's good. Thank you.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you.

I come back to the RCMP.

What lessons has the RCMP learned from this situation?

How will it prepare for similar scenarios to not happen in future, so that Canadian lives are safe and not at risk?

Commr Michael Duheme: In my press conference, I did say that there were exceptional circumstances.

One of the lessons learned here is to explore other tools. If public safety is at risk, explore other tools in order to disrupt.

This is exactly what we did in reaching out to the NSIA, as well as GAC, to look at options, considering that the threshold for laying charges against a diplomat is fairly high and the chance of prosecution sometimes is challenging.

Considering that there was an immediate public safety threat, we stepped outside and used the disruption method, which is not commonly used in the RCMP but has proved to work very well based on the results we've seen.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Rogers, I brought in a private member's motion, M-112. Then the government took action to bring in Bill C-70.

How will Bill C-70 help to protect Canadians in the future, with the tools it gave you?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: There are a number of things in Bill C-70 that could assist the service in dealing with foreign interference threats. I mentioned earlier that there is now a provision for us to be able to engage in resilience discussions and disclosures with people outside of the federal government. That's something we've been doing already.

There are other provisions to allow things like production orders and preservation orders, which could assist our investigations.

Importantly for us, there's a statutory review of our legislation, which will allow the service and its legislation to potentially keep pace with evolving technical threats.

I think I can leave it at that. There are a number of other measures.

I should say that it also closed one of our investigative gaps, which had come to light recently, where CSIS was unable to collect information about a threat actor in Canada if that information resided outside of Canada. That could certainly be applied in a foreign interference context. That was resolved with Bill C-70 also.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dhaliwal.

[Translation]

Ms. Michaud for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. McGregor talked about what the situation with India might mean for Canada's relationship with its allies.

Mr. Morrison, in the Washington Post article you mentioned earlier, you said that your approach was mainly to talk to our allies and send a message to counter misinformation being spread by India about the situation.

Why did you decide to speak to our allies through the media? Is it because you were targeting more the general public in those allied countries? I imagine that there were already conversations happening with those countries.

What does that mean for our relationship with other countries engaging in foreign interference in Canada's democratic institutions? What evidence do we have that India doesn't want to collaborate?

Mr. Duheme, you said earlier that Canada's position on the situation with India right now isn't the same as its position on foreign interference by Russia and China.

What could that mean for Canada's relationship with countries like China and Russia?

My question is for Ms. Drouin or one of the other witnesses.

Mr. David Morrison: Thank you for the question.

With regard to the first part of the question on our allies, I will reiterate that we discussed it with them before going to Singapore.

• (1250)

[*English*]

What we're dealing with here is not unique to Canada. We've mentioned the Five Eyes. I have mentioned that we did things in lockstep with our allies all the way through Singapore, when we returned to Singapore and since, because other countries are also talking to India.

I don't mind saying that our media strategy continues as well, because there are various ways to send messages and to correct the record. Believe me, India is coming at us in full force with its own narrative, which simply doesn't add up. Allies have been an important part of this from the beginning, as have strategic public communications.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

[*English*]

I go now to Mr. MacGregor for two and a half minutes, please.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

On the whole subject of foreign interference, I've heard it in my couple of years at this committee: We know the Iranian diaspora would have something to say about the Government of Iran. I've heard from the Tibetan community about what the People's Republic of China is engaged in. Now, of course, we're hearing the South Asian community with respect to the Government of India.

In my riding, I have a large South Asian population as well. The historic Paldi Sikh Temple is in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I think, to an earlier point, the attention on the Government of India is validating what many in that community have known for quite some time now.

I think my questions will be for both Director Rogers and Commissioner Duheme.

I don't doubt for a second that the men and women in your respective agencies are going to work every day and treating this with utmost seriousness. As a parliamentarian, it's also my job to hold to account, and I can't escape the fact that the most recent NSICOP report labelled Canada as a “low-risk, high reward” environment in which our foreign adversaries are able to operate.

I know that sources have reported to CBC News that the clandestine Indian network is still largely in place. You might see some elements of that disappear and go more quiet.

Maybe we'll start with you, Director Rogers. How do we flip those terms around? With the passage of Bill C-70, do you feel confident that we're now on a path towards making Canada a high-risk, low-reward environment in which to operate for our foreign adversaries?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: I think that's a very important question. I would start by saying that I think the extraordinary circumstances around these events and the fact that the RCMP has gone public demonstrate the seriousness with which we take the issue. I have to imagine that this will set the tone that this is not a permissive environment for the Government of India—or others, for that matter—to operate in. I think this sets a very clear tone that this is not something that would be accepted in Canada.

You're absolutely right that the people within the service will be very diligently pursuing foreign interference from all countries who may seek to perpetrate it here in Canada, including India, China and others.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Sure, give a quick answer. Go ahead.

Commr Michael Duheme: I would add—again, tying it to our public media event on the 14th—that it's about education. It's about letting people know we're there and want to work with them. Any criminal investigation, be it a bike theft or a fraudulent cheque, starts with people coming forward and talking to us. I can appreciate that some communities are reticent about approaching us because of their experience with the police in their respective countries, but we want people to come forward. We want to educate people.

The other challenge we sometimes face is this: All of this is done in a clandestine manner. Until people come forward, or when information is given to us through which we can launch an investigation, we're unhappy. We want people to make sure we're there. The message is that we are working with all departments and the service. We work hand in hand with the service on many of the files.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Dancho, go ahead, please, for five minutes.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, thank you to the witnesses for being here. It is quite the panel we have: the commissioner of the RCMP, the national security adviser, the director of CSIS and two top-level deputy ministers for Public Safety and Global Affairs. I appreciate your time very much, and your commitment to national security in this country. I have no doubt that you all work extremely hard to keep Canadians safe.

Ultimately, of course, you all answer to the Prime Minister in some way or another. He is the head of our government. You'll recall that, in 2015, when Mr. Trudeau first became Prime Minister, a document was released called "Open and Accountable Government". I'm sure you're all familiar with it. It mentions that, as the head of government, the Prime Minister has special responsibility for national security, federal-provincial-territorial relations and the conduct of international affairs.

Do you all agree that the Prime Minister is the head of our national security apparatus? Does anyone disagree with that?

No.

The responsibility ultimately ends with him, as you agreed.

We are in a circumstance in which multiple individuals—one for sure and perhaps others, according to the Washington Post article—have been murdered by those with direct ties to the Government of India. We have quite an extraordinary situation on our hands. We also have a situation in which we have a foreign interference inquiry with Justice Hogue. The real centre of that is China, which has been interfering in multiple elections and looking to undermine our democracy. We have misinformation en masse from Russia. We have issues with Iran. We have issues with Pakistan and others. Canada, in my understanding, has never been in this type of pickle—to put it lightly—where so many adversaries, and others whom we thought were certainly friends, are coming at us from all angles.

Can you point to any other time, deputy minister, when Canada was facing this many threats in this way, domestically, from foreign actors? Was there any other time in the last two generations, for example?

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Drouin: It's true that any attempts at foreign interference need to be taken seriously. It's been said that the last elections were fair and free from the consequences of foreign interference.

As parliamentarians, you introduced Bill C-70, which was a step in—

[*English*]

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Chair, I'm sorry to cut off the national security adviser, but that wasn't, specifically, my question. I appreciate her commentary in response to my commentary, but she was not directly answering my question.

I just put that aside for now, as, actually, my colleague from the NDP mentioned that an NSICOP report labelled Canada "low-risk, high reward", enabling foreign adversaries, in essence, to come to Canada, wreak havoc and cause a lot of crime, chaos and even

death now—from India, for example—as you mentioned. My concern is about leadership from the top, given that the only individual ultimately responsible for national security...

We have death on our hands. We had 13 more individuals in peril. From an objective analysis, things are not going that well in Canada. I appreciate that there are things you've done that we'll never know but should be grateful for. I appreciate that very much, but the fact that there are individuals being murdered in Canada by a foreign government is beyond comprehension. I'm sure you agree.

From our perspective as the official opposition, tasked with holding the Liberal government accountable, this is an abject failure to maintain national security, the fact that individuals have been murdered and that there are communities in this country—the Sikh community, for example—that feel incredibly vulnerable under the so-called leadership of the current Prime Minister. I think that, really, the reason we are here is that he has failed to maintain national security. The reason we have the national inquiry into foreign interference is that there has been a failure to maintain the integrity of our democracy in terms of attacks from China: The confidence issue that creates across Canada is deeply concerning, and the message that sends to other adversaries is that they can take advantage of our democratic process and our trusting nature.

I think that really needs to be underlined, in the sense that your limitations are what the country's leadership's are. I just want to underline that, because I feel that members opposite seem to have an obsession with the opposition leader, when I wish that the Liberal members would apply that same energy to holding their own Prime Minister accountable for failing to stop the murders, by a foreign government, of a number of people in Canada, and for failing to stop interference with our elections. That's really quite a frustrating matter that has happened on their watch, while they've been part of the Liberal government.

Just to conclude, I again thank you for your efforts, and I appreciate very much what you've done to protect Canadians and to fill the gaps created by the lack of leadership by our Prime Minister and his failure to do so.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dancho.

We go now to Mr. Sarai for five minutes.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to remind those who are watching, maybe the press who are here or others who are paying attention to this, that this study is about “electoral interference and criminal activities...by agents of the Government in India”, but there seem to be only three parties that are asking questions on this study, while one party is asking questions based on a new love affair with Canadian journalism. It's pretty interesting that, all of a sudden, there's a big love affair with Canadian journalists over international journalists. I'm pretty intrigued about that, and I hope that goes further in terms of supporting journalism in Canada.

Part of this study focuses on disinformation tactics employed by the Government of India. I'm very pleased to hear that there is actually a media strategy employed on this file. Can somebody elaborate for me what the hallmarks of Indian disinformation are, with some examples?

• (1300)

Ms. Tricia Geddes: The national security adviser spoke a bit about some of the tactics that we've seen in this very particular case. There is a deep concern that these activities are happening, not just from one country but from multiple countries.

One thing we talked a bit about today and need continue to talk about is this: How do we ensure the resilience of Canadians? How do we ensure that they are well informed about efforts to disinform or misinform them? There's more to be done in that space. That's an effort ongoing by the Department of Public Safety, among other colleagues. We're well informed by the intelligence from the service and from the RCMP about the tactics that are being used, but right now what we really need to focus on is how we increase resilience so that Canadians are able to detect that and make sure they're not affected by it.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: We have seen Canada, in the past, even prohibit Russian broadcasters and television, I believe, from working on Canadian networks, because of that disinformation. What I'm hearing from my diaspora, and what other members hear as well, is that, when they watch a lot of international news, unfortunately, they're watching a lot of the propaganda coming from that country. In particular, in this matter, they're hearing that Canada is harbouring terrorists and that India, actually, is only going after terrorists. They're actually justifying it, and they're saying that Canada is accepting terrorists and giving them free rein. What are we doing to counter that narrative that's being spewed to Canadians? Unfortunately, some diaspora populations watch international news more than they watch Canadian broadcasters.

Ms. Tricia Geddes: There are three parts to the strategy. One we've talked a bit about, some of the media strategy that we've employed recently.

We at Public Safety are working very closely with colleagues at the Department of Heritage, who also have engagement with the CRTC, amongst others, in terms of how we manage that at the macro level. How do we deal with some of the outlets that are propagating that disinformation and misinformation? There's work to be done there.

We also spoke about direct engagement with Canadians. I think some of the outreach, the engagement, the trust and confidence that we're talking about are all also going to have significant impacts in

terms of making sure Canadians understand when they are being affected by disinformation and misinformation.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you.

Mr. Rogers, as we've seen in the U.S. indictments against Vikash Yadav and Nikhil Gupta, Indian foreign interference and transnational repression are not isolated to Canada. What work is CSIS doing to engage with our American and other Five Eyes partners to disrupt Indian transnational repression?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: As Mr. Morrison said earlier, we are working very closely with our allies, and this includes intelligence sharing. CSIS will share intelligence that it has about India's tactics here in Canada. We will compare that with the intelligence we have from our allies, and we'll work together to identify further techniques that we can use to disrupt those activities.

I think intelligence sharing is a start. I also think it's important that CSIS continue to build relationships with segments of society that can help to inform us about what they're experiencing and that we can provide guidance to where possible. I know that's something we'll also do in accordance with our Five Eyes allies.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Reporting on India's involvement in criminality and transnational repression has focused on the research and analysis wing, or RAW, of India's external spy agency. What can CSIS tell the committee about how the research and analysis wing functions, particularly here in Canada?

Mr. Daniel Rogers: I don't think I can speak to the specifics of that in this case, particularly as a number of the elements of that would be linked to the RCMP's investigation. I can say that CSIS has had a relationship with RAW, and we have said publicly before that we've seen that Indian proxies in Canada, working at the behest of the Government of India, can do that with India's intelligence apparatus both here and abroad. I'll limit my comments to that for today.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Last, in closing, Mr. Duheme, can the RCMP advise what Canadian Sikhs can do to keep themselves safe and secure in Canada in times when they feel they are at major risk? Even going to a place of worship and praying or participating in any activities that they feel are lawfully allowed in Canada, what measures can they take, and how can they work with your office?

• (1305)

Commr Michael Duheme: I'll go back to what I said previously, that if you see it or you hear it, report it. Make sure we're involved early on. We want to continue the engagement with the different communities, to build that relationship so there's a free flow of information between police and the community.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sarai.

Thank you all for being here today and for all of your excellent testimony. No doubt we will be in contact with all of you at some point down the road as well.

Thank you very much.

We are adjourned.

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