

Royal Canadian Mounted Police | Gendarmerie royal du Canada

INTELLIGENCE AND IDEOLOGICALLY-MOTIVATED VIOLENT EXTREMISM

RCMP SPEAKING POINTS:

- Canadians have the legitimate right to protest and express disagreement with Government of Canada policy or decisions.
- Although most people participating in the Ottawa protest were motivated by a desire to end COVID-related mandates, we assessed that some ideologically motivated extremists were likely present and attempting to leverage the protest and its high profile for their own purpose.
- We knew that some of these individuals posed possible threats to national security.
- Although no formal organized violent plot was identified during the protest in Ottawa, the potential for serious violence by a lone actor or fringe group was never discounted.
- We were fortunate that there was no organized plot of violence as we witnessed in Coutts, Alberta.
- The RCMP investigates persons who are suspected of being engaged in criminal activity, including offences related to terrorist entities. Our investigations target criminal activity that threatens the safety and security of Canadians.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

OPP Commissioner Thomas Carrique has stated that intelligence indicated that the convoy posed a national security threat on or about February 7th. Does the RCMP agree with this assessment?

- The RCMP works closely with the OPP and all of its policing partners and this includes the sharing of intelligence information.
- Although I cannot get into operational specifics, it was known to the RCMP that there were some individuals within the convoy who posed potential threats to national security.
- Once a nexus to national security is identified, the RCMP assumes the lead on the investigation and works collaboratively with other police services to ensure that the threat is addressed.

According to the RCMP's assessment, were there IMV extremists among the convoy's participants?

- Although the majority of individuals participating in the Ottawa protest were motivated by a desire to end COVID-related mandates, some individuals assessed to be possible ideologically motivated extremists were present and attempting to leverage the Convoy's platform and its high profile in Ottawa and across the country.

If pressed for further details on what law enforcement knew:

- These individuals were either known to law enforcement before the convoy's events or identified during the convoy by their online presence espousing racially motivated, ethno-nationalist, of anti-government or anti-authority grievances and in many cases espousing threats to violence in the name of these grievances.

Did the majority of convoy participants also demonstrate elements of IMVE?

- Most participants of the protests in Ottawa expressed frustrations with COVID restrictions and government health mandates.
- While this could be considered as an ideological motivation, it is not a violent one and does not fall within the categories associated with ideologically-motivated violent extremism or ideologically-motivated violent criminality.
- However, some ideologically motivated extremists appeared to try to leverage this platform as a mechanism to air their grievances, particularly those aimed at the government.
- Some of these grievances expressed an intent that could be perceived as potentially violent or extreme.

Did the presence of these individuals at the Ottawa protests constitute any form of criminality?

- The presence of ideologically motivated extremists does not necessarily mean ideologically motivated criminality or ideologically motivated violence will occur.
- It is important to remember that the government does not criminalize personal beliefs and police do not investigate belief.

If pressed further on elements of criminality:

- Expressions of hatred, regardless of how unacceptable they may be, do not typically meet criminal standards unless police hold evidence that demonstrates the statements were in a public place and incited hatred against an identifiable group where it is likely to lead to a breach of the peace.

- The belief itself is not criminal, rather it is the mobilization of belief to action – like inciting hatred against an identifiable group, threatening violence, or committing a violent act – that can be criminal.

What advice did you provide the Government (Minister/PM) regarding the invocation of the EA?

- I briefed the Prime Minister, Ministers, and senior officials, throughout the crisis and provided regular situational awareness updates.
- Some of the considerations at the time of those briefings were:
 - The illegal blockades and occupations taking place;
 - The situation in Ottawa; and
 - The support that the RCMP was providing to law enforcement partners in Ontario and across Canada.

Did the RCMP have any tangible evidence to suggest a link between terrorist threat related activity and the protests occurring nationwide?

- The RCMP was aware of the presence of some individuals and groups that fell under the category of IMVE.
- The RCMP had several files on individuals and/or groups where there was a concern from a “threat to public safety” perspective.

If pressed for further details about potential investigations:

- As there is an ongoing criminal investigation and civil lawsuits, the RCMP is not able to provide any information at this time.

At any point throughout the protests in Ottawa, was there ever the threat of a serious organized violent plot in Ottawa?

- Although the potential for serious violence by a lone actor or fringe groups was never discounted, no formal organized violent plot was identified during the duration of the protests in Ottawa.
- While there was no organized violent plot in Ottawa, a cache of firearms, ammunition and body armour was seized at the Coutts, Alberta, border crossing with markings from the extremist militia known as Diagolon. This demonstrates the concern of groups with extremist agendas infiltrating larger protests.

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SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICAL TOOLS

RCMP SPEAKING POINTS:

- The police are responsible for preventing, detecting and investigating crime to protect the communities they serve.
- As such, the police must have an awareness of online activities and constantly keep pace with the emergence of new technologies.
- The analysis of open source information, including social media, can help detect threats to public safety.
- The RCMP does not access private communications, including private emails and text messages, without a judicial authorization.
- The RCMP's open source activities are in relation to mandated enforcement initiatives and follow rigorous Government of Canada and departmental legislation and policies.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

What is the RCMP's role/involvement in monitoring social media? Please discuss and explain all tools and techniques used.

- The RCMP may maintain situational awareness and collect open source information, including from social media, in relation to emerging and/or ongoing events.
- The RCMP may leverage social media analytical tools that yield results similar to what the general public would uncover using the internet.
- The RCMP's use of social media analytical tools adhere to rigorous departmental regulations and Government of Canada legislation and policies, including the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and *Privacy Act*.

Did the RCMP monitor any protest activity prior to or during the crisis?

- The RCMP maintains situational awareness of certain ideologically-motivated violent extremist groups who have been using the COVID-19 pandemic to spread

propaganda, exacerbate social tensions, encourage criminal or violent actions, and undermine trust in public institutions and government.

If pressed on whether the RCMP engaged with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner:

- The RCMP engaged the Office of the Privacy Commissioner in relation to the enforcement responses against illegal activity during the Freedom Convoy occupations.
 - The open source information leveraged assisted with the identification of threats and investigative leads related to the convoy occupation against public safety, officer safety, Internationally Protected Persons, and critical infrastructure.
 - The RCMP will continue to work with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner on this matter and adhere to departmental regulations and Government of Canada legislation and policies.