



INFORMATION INTEGRITY LAB AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING DIGITAL EDUCATION FOR INTELLIGENCE PROFESSIONALS

Date: November 22, 2022

Disclaimer: This briefing note contains the encapsulation of views presented by the speaker and does not exclusively represent the views of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies.

KEY EVENTS

On November 22, 2022, Alan Jones, Executive Advisor in the University of Ottawa Professional Development Institute (uOttawa PDI), presented *Information Integrity Lab and the Importance of Continuing Digital Education for Intelligence Professionals*. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period with questions from the audience and CASIS Vancouver executives. The focus of the presentation was the role of uOttawa PDI in regard to educating on national security.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

Jones put forward that in order to bring Canadian national security up to standard, it is crucial to continuously update and improve on every facet of national security. This includes technology, literacy on national security topics, and countering disinformation.

BACKGROUND

Jones presented on the issue of illiteracy on national security topics in Canada. A part of this is due to the common preconception that national security is a narrow matter and not one that is connected to other issues, such as environmental impact, societal health and well-being, the economy, or financial stability. The implication of this attitude is that other nations will eventually become much more well-versed in national security and intelligence issues than Canada.

Jones proposed to uOttawa PDI a national security program in order to provide a more comprehensive background to public servants and the private sector regarding the true definition of national security. Interest in national security was strengthened through certain circumstances at the time this program was proposed. For instance, the economy was not doing very well at this time during the Chrétien government, and national security could help provide answers on how to alleviate this. . It was also seen that Canada's legislation and institutions at the time were not able to stop terrorist plots, radicalization, and money laundering, and a program in national security could be a solution to resolve this issue.

The speaker went over the cybersecurity program he implemented with uOttawa PDI, taking into account the expanding role of technology as it becomes increasingly enmeshed with national security. The program was also conceived in response to observing how groups that threatened national security would use the internet in recruitment and radicalization.

The CSIS Act has been challenged in courts for nearly four decades, and the Emergency Act will soon be put to the test as well. This is due to recent events with the Freedom Convoy in Ottawa. Jones predicts that the challenges the Emergencies Act will undergo will be just as messy as the CSIS Act.

The speaker further elaborated on the national security courses offered by uOttawa PDI. He specifies that these courses are not intended for CSIS, but for public servants across the board. Jones highlighted a course for foresight on complex policy problems, the aforementioned cybersecurity course—which is not just aimed at engineers, but at those who are also in more managerial positions—and a coding for veterans course, which counts towards the cybersecurity program.

The information integrity lab is a joint effort to counter disinformation and misinformation. It is a collaborative forum for experts, practitioners, and academics to look at the protection and integrity of the information ecosystem, democratic institutions, and private citizens. It aims to enhance public trust and operate at high legal and ethical standards. As Canada continues to be subject to misinformation and disinformation, the information integrity lab aims to clear up what the objective facts are without choosing sides. A recent development in the information environment is the takeover of Twitter by Elon Musk, which has caused uncertainty in the changes that may occur.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

- Canada has historically been behind the curve when it comes to literacy on the topic of national security, perceiving it as more narrow than it actually is.
- Jones and uOttawa PDI have developed courses on national security and cybersecurity to help combat the issue of illiteracy on topics of national security.
- With the Freedom Convoy protest in Ottawa and the invocation of the Emergencies Act, it will be undergoing a close and messy examination, much like the CSIS Act.
- The Information integrity lab aims to combat misinformation and disinformation by having experts, practitioners and academics work together to verify objective facts without leading people one way or another.



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