

CANADA

Canadian Official Charged With Leaks Had Access to Foreign Intelligence

RCMP's director general of national-intelligence coordination accused of violating state-secrets law



An RCMP office building in Surrey, British Columbia. PHOTO: BEN NELMS/REUTERS

By Paul Vieira

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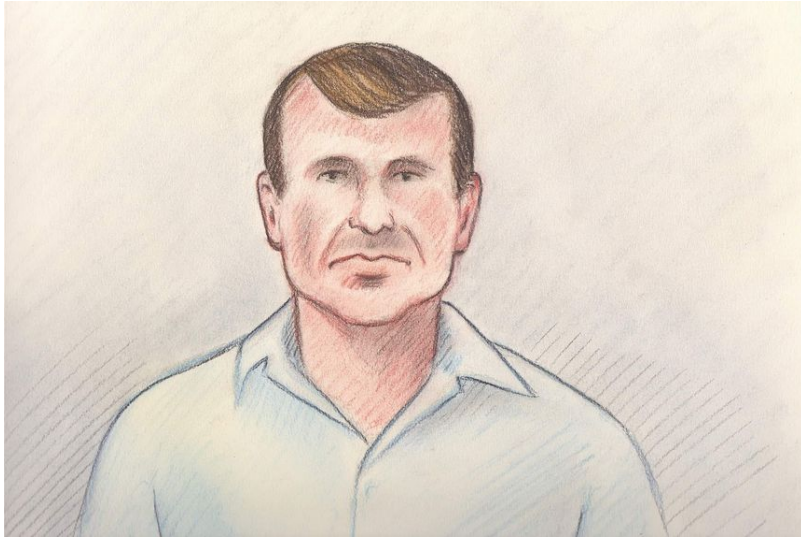
OTTAWA—A senior Canadian intelligence official facing five charges for violating the country's state-secrets law had access to intelligence collected domestically and by Canada's foreign allies, such as the U.S. and U.K., Canadian police said Monday.

Canada's Royal Canadian Mounted Police said it is assessing the impact of the alleged activities.

"We are aware of the potential risk to agency operations of our partners in Canada and abroad," Brenda Lucki, the RCMP's commissioner, said in a statement.

On Friday, police filed charges against Cameron Ortis, the RCMP's director general of national-intelligence coordination. Prosecutors say the 47-year-old Mr. Ortis, employed by the RCMP since 2007, is alleged to have obtained, stored and processed sensitive information with the intent to communicate it to unauthorized people.

According to court filings, Mr. Ortis is alleged to have violated national-security laws as far back as February 2015. The bulk of the national-security charges stem from a one-year period beginning in September of last year, in which Mr. Ortis is accused of sharing intelligence with either a foreign entity or a terrorist group, and possessing either a device or software used to conceal information.



A Sept. 13 court sketch of Cameron Ortis, a senior RCMP official facing five charges for violating the country's state-secrets law.
PHOTO: LAUREN FOSTER-MACLEOD/REUTERS

He also faces two other charges related to breach of trust and unauthorized use of a computer.

Ms. Lucki said the allegations, “if proven true, are extremely unsettling.”

Attempts to reach Mr. Ortis were unsuccessful. As of late last week, he didn’t have a lawyer when he made a brief court appearance. He has yet to have a bail hearing or enter a plea, and his next scheduled court appearance is Friday. Prosecutors say they will oppose efforts to obtain bail.

Canada is part of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance, which includes the U.S, U.K., Australia and New Zealand. Security analysts say Mr. Ortis, in his role, would have been familiar with the Five Eyes’ work.

Stephanie Carvin, an assistant professor at Ottawa’s Carleton University and a former national-security analyst in the Canadian government, said the intelligence Mr. Ortis had at his disposal included details about intelligence sources, their methods and plans.

“We are talking real sharp end of the stick stuff here,” Prof. Carvin said.

A spokesman from the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa referred questions to the RCMP. A representative for the U.K. Embassy in Ottawa didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

Officials haven't provided details of the scope of Mr. Ortis's activity, or whom he was allegedly in touch with about transferring information.

"This is a situation that we take very seriously...and responsible authorities are engaged with," said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who on Monday was campaigning for national elections on Oct. 21. He declined to comment further.

Over six years ago, a Canadian naval officer was sentenced to prison for leaking military intelligence to Russia. The leaks caused a temporary breach between Canadian military intelligence and U.S. counterparts, according to court testimony from Canadian intelligence specialists.

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