

OPINION
& EDITORIALS



The CENTRAL NEWSPAPER

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NATO espionage arrest exposes glaring holes in Canadian security

By Scott McGregor
Canadian screening cleared an intern now accused of spying inside NATO headquarters. The arrest of a Canadian intern accused of spying inside NATO's senior military headquarters in Belgium reaches beyond one person or one failed security check. It shows how hostile states can combine espionage, criminal networks, technology and trusted access to weaken an alliance without firing a shot. Belgian prosecutors allege that the intern, who is of Chinese origin, conducted espionage for an unidentified third country while interning at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, known as SHAPE, in Mons, Belgium. They also accuse her of belonging to a criminal organization.

The suspect has not been convicted, and the allegations have not been tested in court. Belgian authorities have not identified the foreign state or the alleged criminal group. The organized-crime allegation deserves close attention. Espionage is often pictured as a direct relationship between a foreign intelligence officer and a recruited source. Modern operations can be less visible. Criminal networks may provide money laundering, false documents, encrypted communications, surveillance, transportation, cyber services or access to compromised insiders. A state gains distance and deniability, while the network gains money, protection or influence. That overlap is a feature of hybrid warfare. NATO describes hybrid threats as a mixture of military and non-military, covert and overt tools, including cyberattacks, economic pressure, disinformation and proxies. These activities blur the line between peace and conflict while exploiting weaknesses inside open societies. SHAPE is NATO's strategic military headquarters for Allied Command Operations, which is responsible for planning and executing the alliance's military operations. Even an intern with limited formal access may learn a great deal by observing personnel, routines, internal relationships, security procedures and the movement of information. Small details become valuable when combined with cyber collection, public records and information gathered elsewhere. An insider does not need to leave carrying secret files to cause damage. Information about who makes decisions, how quickly the alliance responds, which systems are vulnerable or where disagreements exist among members can help an adversary prepare for a crisis. An insider may also identify recruitment targets or expose weaknesses in contractors and supply chains.

Media reports state that the suspect was vetted by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the RCMP before Global Affairs Canada authorized the clearance required for her NATO placement. A federal court ruling had already upheld a Public Service Commission finding of fraud involving a Canada Border Services Agency staffing process, reports say. That finding was administrative, not a criminal conviction. Even so, honesty, reliability and judgment are basic elements of security screening. Canadians deserve to know whether the finding appeared during the review, how it was assessed and whether all agencies involved had access to the same information. The suspect had reportedly worked at or held placements with Statistics Canada, the National Research Council, the Canadian Space Agency, the European Space Agency and the World Trade Organization. That career placed her near government information, emerging technology and international policy before she arrived at NATO. No screening system can prevent every betrayal. A person may be recruited after receiving a clearance, and circumstances can change. Access should be reconsidered as an individual changes positions, develops new foreign relationships, faces pressure or seeks entry into increasingly sensitive institutions. NATO security personnel reportedly detected the suspicious activity and referred the matter to Belgian military intelligence. Belgian authorities then searched the suspect's residence and workplace before making the arrest. Canada has faced serious insider breaches before. The FBI alerted Canadian authorities about naval intelligence officer Jeffrey Delisle, who later admitted to selling highly classified Five Eyes information to Russia. The investigation that led to the conviction of senior RCMP intelligence official Cameron Ortis grew out of a multinational investigation into Phantom Secure, an encrypted communications company used by international criminal organizations. Evidence recovered during that operation helped investigators trace unauthorized disclosures back to Ortis. In that case, an investigation rooted in organized crime exposed a breach at the heart of Canadian intelligence.

The cases are different, and the NATO suspect remains accused rather than convicted. Together, they show how allied or multinational investigations have played an important role in exposing security breaches in Canada. For NATO, the danger extends beyond headquarters and intelligence databases. Allied forces depend on ports, airports, railways, telecommunications systems, defence contractors, laboratories and civilian supply chains. Transnational criminal organizations already know how to move money, corrupt insiders, conceal ownership and operate across borders. Those capabilities can be rented, directed or quietly exploited by hostile states. Canada's intelligence service has warned that foreign governments increasingly use proxies and criminal organizations for hostile activity, including espionage, coercion and transnational repression. In a crisis, similar networks could interfere with shipping, compromise a contractor, move restricted technology, collect information around bases or disrupt the movement of troops and equipment. Canada and its allies need closer co-operation among counter-intelligence, criminal intelligence, cyber defence and security screening. Information held by one department must be available to those protecting sensitive positions. Clearances should be treated as continuing assessments rather than permanent certificates of trust. Hybrid warfare succeeds by exploiting the gaps between institutions. Police investigate organized crime, intelligence agencies monitor foreign states and defence departments prepare for military threats. An adversary can combine all three. Our security systems must be able to do the same.

The arrest in Belgium is more than an individual criminal case. It is a warning that the next threat to allied forces may already be inside a trusted institution, supported by networks operating quietly below the threshold of open conflict.

Letters To The Editor:

WHAT IS ON YOUR MIND? Send letters to newspaper@ocentral.com
Dear Editor:
Mr. Ingino - So sad to see that you have not put your name in for Mayor again. As it stands all that you had in your 2022 platform could have been a great asset to Oshawa. Instead we are worst off. Poverty at an all time high. Food banks at max. Drugs and crime is the shame of our core. Carter has not done one thing for the city except make us look worst than before. Now we have his side kick Mariemietri wanting to become mayor. I think that would finally sink us. When I say us I do not think those elected. As they have clearly shown no care for the average tax payer. 20 million dollar for an outdoor pool. Like seriously. A pool that may be used four months of the year. The waste of taxpayer dollars are endless. Look at the Broadbent park. 30 million for basically a landscaped open field. We need men like you at the helm. Men that know the value of the people of Oshawa. I remember years ago. I could not pay my OPUC bill. You had your office next door to the public utilities. I was so upset. I walked in your office. You made a few calls. Then told me my bill was paid and to pay you back as I could afford. I will never forget that good gesture. I thanked you then. I thank you today and forever.
Chuck Riley, Oshawa

Dear Editor:
The issue of homelessness in Oshawa has become impossible to ignore. Every day, residents see the growing challenges faced by those living without stable housing, while businesses, neighbourhoods, and community organizations struggle to respond to a situation that continues to grow. Homelessness is a complex issue that cannot be solved with one simple answer. It requires compassion, but it also requires responsibility, planning, and action. Providing temporary solutions without addressing the root causes — mental health challenges, addiction, affordable housing shortages, and access to support services — only allows the problem to continue. Oshawa residents want to see a community where vulnerable people are treated with dignity and where help is available to those who genuinely need it. At the same time, residents and business owners deserve safe, clean, and welcoming streets. These two goals should not be viewed as opposites. The city, regional government, social agencies, and community partners must work together on a long-term strategy that includes supportive housing, better access to mental health and addiction services, and clear plans for managing public spaces. Ignoring the issue or simply moving people from one location to another does not create a solution. A compassionate city is one that helps people get back on their feet while also protecting the quality of life of everyone who calls Oshawa home. The people of Oshawa are willing to help, but they need leadership, transparency, and a plan that produces measurable results. This issue has gone on long enough. It is time for meaningful action.
Sincerely, Cliff Jones, Oshawa

Dear Editor:
For many people in our community, the dream of working hard and building a stable life has become increasingly difficult to achieve. Today, even people who are working multiple jobs are finding themselves struggling to afford the basics — food, rent, transportation, and everyday expenses. It is difficult to understand how someone can work two or even three jobs and still worry about whether they can pay their bills or put enough food on the table. Employment should provide a path toward stability, not a constant struggle to survive. The cost of housing has placed tremendous pressure on families, seniors, and individuals. Rent continues to rise, while wages often fail to keep pace with the increasing cost of living. Grocery bills have also become a major concern, with many people having to make impossible choices between paying bills and buying healthy food. These challenges are affecting hardworking members of our community who are doing everything society asks of them. They are showing up to work, contributing to the economy, and trying to provide for themselves and their families, yet they are still falling behind. We need to have serious conversations about affordability, housing, wages, and support systems. A community cannot thrive when the people who keep it running cannot afford to live in it. This is not about asking for handouts. It is about recognizing that hard work should still have value and that people who contribute to our community deserve the opportunity to live with security and dignity. It is time for leaders, businesses, and communities to work together on solutions that make life more affordable for everyone.
Caroline Smith, Pickering

Dear Editor:
As a parent, there is nothing more difficult than watching your child become afraid of something that should be a normal and positive part of life — going to school. Every morning, instead of being excited to learn, see friends, and grow, my son worries about what he may face during the school day. A place that should represent opportunity, safety, and encouragement has become a source of anxiety and fear. Parents trust schools to provide a safe environment where children can focus on their education and development. While teachers and staff work hard every day, we cannot ignore the concerns that many families are experiencing. Bullying, intimidation, violence, and mental health challenges are realities that many students face, and they require serious attention. No child should feel afraid to walk through the doors of their school. No parent should have to convince their child that everything will be okay when they are genuinely worried about what might happen. We need stronger conversations between parents, schools, students, and community leaders. We need to make sure that concerns are heard, that problems are addressed quickly, and that every child knows they are protected and supported. Education is about more than books and grades. It is about creating an environment where children feel safe, respected, and valued. My hope is that we never become so used to hearing about children struggling that we stop listening. Every child deserves the chance to learn without fear.
Sincerely,
A Concerned Parent

SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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or

mail to 136 Simcoe St. North Suite 4 Oshawa