

Modi denies involvement in violence

DIPLOMATS
Continued from NPI

The official said that since Nijjar's death, the pace of threats has escalated to such an extent that authorities have warned a dozen individuals of Indian descent that there was credible information they could be targeted. The official and others spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the investigation, citing the sensitivity of allegations that have caused a rupture in relations between Delhi and Ottawa.

India has vehemently denied the accusations. A statement issued by the country's Ministry of External Affairs on Monday said that Modi's government "strongly rejects these preposterous imputations and ascribes them to the political agenda" of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Even so, the new allegations add to mounting concerns among Western security officials and human rights organizations that Modi's government has become one of the world's most aggressive practitioners of "transnational repression," or the use of violence and other means to neutralize perceived homegrown adversaries who have sought refuge in other countries.

The Biden administration, which has cultivated closer ties with India, last year confronted Modi administration officials with intelligence that India's Research and Analysis Wing, a spy service known as RAW, was behind an attempt to assassinate a Sikh separatist in New York — a failed plot with parallels to the Nijjar case in Canada.

Nijjar and Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, the target of the New York plot, were leaders of a movement that for decades has campaigned to carve out an independent Sikh state in northern India. The movement was marked by violent clashes in the 1980s, but has been relatively dormant since a crackdown led to a mass exodus of Sikhs to other countries.

Modi, who came to power as a champion of Hindu nationalism, has revived concerns about the supposed threat posed by Sikhs living abroad. Modi and other officials have frequently accused Canada, which has the world's largest population of Sikhs outside India, of harbouring terrorists.

Canadian officials said they only recently began to grasp the magnitude of the covert campaign of violence India has waged against Sikhs as new evidence emerged from an investigation of Nijjar's killing that is led by the RCMP but has involved other agencies, as well as intelligence provided by the United States and other allies.

Officials said the investigation has uncovered evidence of Indian government involvement in home invasions, drive-by shootings, arson and at least one additional killing.

Officials cited the death of Sukhdool Singh, who was shot in Winnipeg on Sept. 20, 2023, less than a day after he was featured in a wanted list of gangsters posted on X by India's National Investigation Agency.

The Washington Post



THE CANADIAN PRESS/PATRICK DOYLE

Canada issued notices on Monday ordering six of India's diplomats to leave the country — including top diplomat Sanjay Kumar Verma, seen here in an August 2023 interview with reporters, and its top consular official in Toronto.

THE RCMP'S EXTRAORDINARY STATEMENT ON THE CRIMINAL PROBE OF INDIAN OFFICIALS

'COMPELLED' TO SPEAK ABOUT 'SIGNIFICANT THREAT'

The RCMP on Monday issued the following statement on the investigation into alleged criminal activity by Indian officials on Canadian soil.

An extraordinary situation is compelling us to speak about what we have discovered in our multiple ongoing investigations into the involvement of agents of the Government of India in serious criminal activity in Canada. It is not our normal process to publicly disclose information about ongoing investigations, in an effort to preserve their integrity. However, we feel it is necessary to do so at this time due to the significant threat to public safety in our country.

Over the past few years, and more recently, law enforcement agencies in Canada, including the RCMP, have successfully investigated and charged a significant number of individuals for their direct involvement in homicides, extortions and other criminal acts of violence.

In addition, there has been well over a dozen credible and imminent threats to life which have led to the conduct of Duty to Warn by law enforcement with members of the South Asian community, and specifically members of the pro-Khalistan movement. As a result, in February 2024, the RCMP created a multi-disciplinary team to investigate and co-ordinate efforts to combat this threat. The team has learned a signifi-

cant amount of information about the breadth and depth of criminal activity orchestrated by agents of the Government of India, and consequential threats to the safety and security of Canadians and individuals living in Canada.

Despite law enforcement action, the harm has continued, posing a serious threat to our public safety. We reached a point where we felt it was imperative to confront the Government of India and inform the public about some very serious findings that have been uncovered through our investigations.

There is a violent extremism threat in Canada that Canada and India have been working on over the years. However, these threats are impacting Canada and India's ability to collaborate.

Earlier this week, the Deputy Commissioner of Federal Policing, Mark Flynn, made attempts to meet with his Indian law enforcement counterparts to discuss violent extremism occurring in Canada and India, and present evidence pertaining to agents of the Government of India's involvement in serious criminal activity in Canada. These attempts were unsuccessful, therefore Deputy Commissioner Flynn met with officials of the Government of India, along with the National Security and Intelligence Advisor (NSIA), Nathalie Drouin, and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs David Morrison over the weekend.

Through our national task force and other investigative efforts, the RCMP has

obtained evidence that demonstrates four very serious issues:

- Violent extremism impacting both countries;
- Links tying agents of the Government of India (GOI) to homicides and violent acts;
- The use of organized crime to create a perception of an unsafe environment targeting the South Asian Community in Canada; and
- Interference into democratic processes.

Investigations have revealed that Indian diplomats and consular officials based in Canada leveraged their official positions to engage in clandestine activities, such as collecting information for the Government of India, either directly or through their proxies; and other individuals who acted voluntarily or through coercion.

Evidence also shows that a wide variety of entities in Canada and abroad have been used by agents of the Government of India to collect information. Some of these individuals and businesses were coerced and threatened into working for the Government of India. The information collected for the Government of India is then used to target members of the South Asian community.

This evidence was presented directly to Government of India officials, urging their co-operation in stemming the violence and requesting our law enforcement agencies work together to address these issues.

The RCMP is hoping to address these threats

through our relationship with the Government of India and the National Investigation Agency with the end goal of strengthening the safety and security of the Canadian public and South Asian community.

The safety and security of our citizens, regardless of their background or beliefs, remains a top priority for the RCMP and we will not tolerate any form of intimidation, harassment, or harmful targeting of communities or individuals in Canada.

We are seeking the public's assistance in reporting incidents of foreign interference by the Government of India. Anyone who feels threatened online or in person should report the incident to their local police. If someone is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1. Individuals can also report to the RCMP National Security Information Network by phone at 1-800-420-5805 or online at rcmp.ca/report-it.

We recognize the concern and fear people might be feeling when seeing this news and we recognize that South Asians are victims of the activities we're investigating. We want to assure all Canadians that their safety and security is at the forefront of everything we do and we urge the public and South Asian communities to remain calm and give law enforcement and Canadian officials time to continue discussions.

While the RCMP does not generally comment on investigative matters to preserve operational integrity, we will keep the public updated as things develop.