Who is Richard Fadden, Canada's new national security adviser?

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Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's appointee as his new national security adviser, Richard Fadden, has long pressed for the national security apparatus to be given bigger budgets and greater powers

A federal government official for over 35 years, Fadden has largely focused on security and intelligence matters since at least 2000, including serving as head of Canada's premier spy agency, the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS), and most recently as deputy Defense Minister.

From 2000 to 2002, Fadden was deputy clerk at the Privy Council Office, which has played a leading role in overseeing and directing the work of the police in matters of security and surveillance. From February 2001, Fadden took on the additional responsibility of serving as security and intelligence coordinator.

After a spell serving as deputy minister in two government departments, Natural Resources and Citizenship and Immigration, he was named CSIS's director in 2009. During his time there, Fadden was reportedly the first CSIS head to play a direct role in collaborating with the so-called Five Eyes alliance, which unites Canada's signals intelligence or eavesdropping agency with the US National Security Agency (NSA) and those of Britain, Australia, and New Zealand.

Fadden assumed the leadership of CSIS at a time when the agency was coming under increased criticism for its role in the arrest and torture of Canadian nationals travelling abroad and its ever-widening surveillance of the Canadian population.

Fadden's response was to vigorously defend CSIS and attack his critics. In his first public speech as head of CSIS, delivered at a security conference in Ottawa, he claimed that the Canadian population had a "blind spot" in their appreciation of the dangers of terrorism. He complained bitterly, "Almost any attempt to fight terrorism by the government is portrayed as an overreaction or an assault on liberty. It is a peculiar position, given that terrorism is the ultimate attack on liberties."

According to Fadden, "It sometimes seems that to be accused of having terrorist connections in Canada has become a status symbol, a badge of courage in the struggle against the real enemy, which apparently is government."

This, claimed Fadden, had produced a situation in which concerns about human rights were constraining the activities of the intelligence agencies and national security apparatus. He berated judges for pressuring the spy agencies to "cough up" national security secrets, including basic information about the evidence used to indefinitely detain without trial alleged terrorism suspects under Canada's "national security certificate" program.

Claimed Fadden, "The debate about national security in Canada, and in other countries, has often been unsatisfying because it is shackled to one rigid but persistent construct–that security and human rights are always in opposition, that they are a balancing act of sorts."

The implications of such comments could not be clearer: the interests of the spy agencies and police should come before the troublesome matter of adhering to democratic procedures and human rights, which only get in the way of the intelligence agencies.

Fadden's views find broad support among a ruling elite which is determined to remove any remaining limits on the ability of CSIS and the police to spy on the population and suppress all forms of working-class or left wing political opposition.

Ray Boisvert, former assistant director at CSIS, told

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the *Ottawa Citizen* that Fadden's "new posting signals to allies that Canada takes national security–including budgets, capabilities and leadership–seriously."

Wesley Wark, a security and intelligence expert at the University of Ottawa and former government adviser, commented, "Pulling Fadden out of DND (Department of National Defence) after only a year-and-a-half and putting him in as (national security advisor) signals that the PM feels he needs strong, experienced advice from an adviser trusted by the Canadian security and intelligence community leadership and known to Canada's allies at a time of heightened threats."

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