

Spy watchdog grows over “deeply concerning” mistakes by CSIS

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The ministerial watchdog over the Canadian Security Intelligence Service has warned the government of “deeply concerning” inaccuracies in CSIS’s work — errors that could have serious “negative consequences” for people the spy agency investigates.

In her latest top-secret report card on CSIS to the public safety minister, Eva Plunkett reveals a “notable increase” in errors spotted in the spy service’s records and a “substantially larger number” of cases of policy breaches.

Plunkett uncovered dozens of instances of failure to adhere to CSIS policy and 43 errors in operational reporting.

“These instances of non-compliance and errors are not isolated to one program or one set of processes. They do appear in key core activities of the service,” Plunkett said in the November report to then-public safety minister Peter Van Loan.

“I am unable to offer you an explanation for this continuing year-over-year increase, suffice to say the number of non-compliance issues and the number of errors identified continue to increase each year and are a very real concern that merits attention.”

A declassified version of Plunkett’s classified report to the public safety minister for 2008-09 was obtained by The Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act.

Vic Toews has since become public safety minister. As inspector general, Plunkett serves as Toews’ “eyes and ears” on the spy agency.

Overall, Plunkett found CSIS did not act beyond its legal authority, nor did it contravene any ministerial directions or use its powers “unreasonably or unnecessarily.”

The heavily censored document is stripped of specific cases and sensitive examples.

But Plunkett calls for “greater diligence” in following policy and “greater rigour in the writing, review and approval of operational reports.”