

Canadian police fatally shoot man outside meeting on controversial dam project

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Police in Dawson Creek, British Columbia, fatally shot a man Thursday evening who was allegedly part of a protest outside a BC Hydro public consultation. The event was planned as an information evening on the company's Site C dam project in the northeast of the province.

Initial reports indicated that a disturbance took place at the event, with a man turning over tables and tearing down posters. At first, media sources alleged that the man was subsequently shot, but it later emerged that officers shot a different individual while responding to the disturbance.

The unusual circumstances surrounding the shooting were further illustrated by the intervention of the Independent Investigation Organization (IIO), the provincial body tasked with examining cases of potential police wrongdoing. IIO spokeswoman Kelly Kilpatrick said Friday evening that in the more than 90 cases in which she had been involved, she had never seen such a dramatic change in the alleged events.

"We verified, verified, verified. At two o'clock I was told the same guy, at three o'clock I was told the same guy, then I land in Dawson Creek and I'm told 'different guy,'" Kilpatrick said at a media conference Friday evening. She continued, "The RCMP as well as the IIO spent close to four hours last night confirming what we thought was the most relevant, most accurate information. To come speak to you now almost 24 hours later, and provide a significant change in the information is not something we typically find ourselves dealing with."

On Monday, after a delay of almost four days, police identified the man as 48-year-old James Daniel McIntyre. But they have refused to announce the identity of the officers involved. They claim that McIntyre was wielding a knife when officers came into

contact with him, but even the police version of events does not mention that he posed a threat to anyone. In fact, reports said that officers were in a standoff with him outside the hotel where the event took place, and fired after he refused to drop his knife and began acting aggressively. The knife was later recovered from the scene.

The online group Anonymous later released a statement declaring that the dead man was one of its members who had been participating in a protest over the planned construction of the dam, which will use large tracts of environmentally sensitive land in the Peace River region, as well as land controlled by First Nation communities. Repeated protests against the project have occurred over the past year. In May, members of a First Nation community in northeastern BC held a protest outside the provincial legislature in Victoria over the contamination of fish stocks in local rivers by a previous BC Hydro dam project, a phenomenon which they fear will be replicated by Site C.

Anonymous called for supporters across the country to protest at RCMP stations in every province. On Sunday, the RCMP national web site and local web site for the Dawson Creek detachment were down. Anonymous had listed these as targets in its earlier statement.

The group's version of events was backed up by a *National Post* report noting that a Twitter message was posted earlier Thursday by a user named Jaymack9 stating that an Anonymous splinter group would be protesting at the Site C event. The Twitter account that posted the message has posted nothing since Thursday.

In comments to the *Alaska Highway News*, a local witness confirmed that the victim was wearing a Guy Fawkes mask. This has become a symbol associated

with Anonymous internationally. The witness met someone after the incident who had taken cellphone footage, and told the local news site what he saw. “He had a video he showed me, and he zoomed in to see what mask it was. [The man who took the video] didn’t know that it was called a Guy Fawkes mask,” the local resident said.

The IIO was called in to investigate another police shooting Saturday, when a suicidal man outside a police station in Surrey was fatally shot by an officer. Another officer suffered a non-life threatening injury in the incident.

Shootings in the province have risen sharply over recent years. During fiscal year 2013-14, RCMP officers were involved in five shootings, but this more than doubled to 11 in 2014-15. There have already been six shootings involving officers since April this year.

Thursday’s events in Dawson Creek are made even more troubling in the context of the mass surveillance of environmental and other protest groups that the government has routinely conducted over recent years. Given what is known about such programs, and the claim of Anonymous that they gave prior notification of the protest at the BC Hydro event, the question arises as to whether the harsh police response was guided by political considerations.

Speaking Sunday, Kilpatrick admitted that the IIO was cooperating closely with the police in its investigations in Dawson Creek. Questioned as to whether Canada’s main spy agency, CSIS (Canadian Security and Intelligence Service), was involved, she answered, “No comment.”

A document obtained via a freedom of information request last year revealed how the Government Operations Centre (GOC), a body within Public Safety Canada, had spied on at least 600 protests and meetings over the previous seven years. These included environmental demonstrations against pipeline projects, First Nation actions against the destruction of land by energy firms, and even public discussions at universities. The intelligence gathered at these meetings was collated by GOC in a central database.

In a related complaint lodged with the Security and Intelligence Review Committee (SIRC), the parliamentary body ostensibly tasked with overseeing Canada’s spy agencies, the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association accused intelligence agents of

spying on protest groups in northern BC opposed to Enbridge’s Northern Gateway pipeline. The complaint also requested an investigation of claims that agents infiltrated protest groups.

Neither of these revelations even touched upon the massive spying network built up by the intelligence agencies under successive governments, including the surveillance of the electronic communications of all Canadians, and the undermining of basic legal norms.

Since then, the Conservative government has vastly expanded the powers of the national security apparatus. Bill C-51, framed as an anti-terrorist measure, was passed into law last month and accelerates the drive towards police state rule. Among a wide range of anti-democratic moves, it grants CSIS the power to actively intervene against groups or individuals deemed to be a threat to economic or national security, Canadian diplomatic interests, the constitutional order, or territorial sovereignty.



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