

BLUE LINE NEWSWEEK

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Executive Digest

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MIDHURST, Ont. - Ontario's top pathologist is calling the death of a mentally ill man who died after police shot him with a Taser an "index case" where the use of the electric stun gun was a key factor.

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Paulson says he's tackling RCMP harassment



ctv.ca

Jun 03 2013

OTTAWA - Canada's top Mountie is fighting back against high-profile claims of harassment within the RCMP, saying some members won't "get on board" with his effort to rid the police force of abusive behaviour.

The force is changing its management style and making real gains, Bob Paulson said Monday before a Senate committee looking into harassment and bullying.

But the RCMP commissioner levelled pointed criticism at members of the force who have publicly aired their complaints.

"We are progressing, honourable senators, believe me. But like any workforce or workplace, we have people who, for one reason or another, will not get on board with the mission

of the organization and are looking for easy street," Paulson said.

"I can't be continually defending against outlandish claims that have not been tested or established, but yet are being put forward as though they are gospel and representative of the modern workplace experience of the RCMP, because they are not."

He questioned the point of a recent lawsuit by Staff Sgt. Caroline O'Farrell, who alleges she suffered cruel treatment - including hazing rituals - while a member of the force's famed Musical Ride in the 1980s.

Paulson said he met with O'Farrell before she filed the suit to see what he could do, but she wasn't open to discussion.

"I asked what I, what we, what anyone

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could do to help her," Paulson said.

"She didn't want our help. She would only hand me her statement of claim ahead of it being filed, while telling me that if these matters about the Musical Ride ever made it into the public it would sure be embarrassing for the RCMP. And she sure was right."

Paulson also took aim at Cpl. Roland Beaulieu, a British Columbia Mountie on stress leave who wanted to testify before the same group of senators. A separate committee is now looking into whether the RCMP tried to muzzle him.

The Mounted Police Professional Association of Canada, which represents many regular and civilian Mounties, says the RCMP recently told Beaulieu if he was well enough to go to Ottawa to testify, he should be fit enough to work.

Paulson charged Monday that Beaulieu, who works with the association as secretary, holds down the position "without any difficulty."

He directly accused Beaulieu of seeking money from the RCMP to go away quietly.

"Just last week he sent me a request for \$700,000, or alternatively \$500,000 tax-free, as he put it, a couple of promotions, some extended pension benefits. In exchange he says he'll leave the force. The implicit message I get from this is: Or else."

Paulson also accused another outspoken Mountie, Cpl. Pete Merrifield, of being upset because the police force "took issue with him running for Parliament."

Several RCMP officers have complained of abusive behaviour and intimidation since Cpl. Catherine Galliford went public in 2011 with allegations of harassment.

The watchdog that oversees the RCMP said in February the force must take "swift and effective action" on complaints of workplace

bullying and harassment to restore the shaken confidence of both members and the public.

The Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP recommended basic changes to the way in which internal grievances about harassment are handled by the Mounties.

It called for a more independent process, strict timelines for responding to accusations and force-wide training.

Paulson said he's implementing modern, leading-edge strategies to ensure a respectful, collegial workplace but also an effective, productive police force.

"Let's face it: some people's ambitions exceed their abilities," he said. "I cannot lead a force that accommodates and seeks to compensate people for those unachieved ambitions."

"Policing is a very tough job. It's very rewarding but it's also very demanding. Frankly, it's not for everyone."

The commissioner said the force works with members suffering from post-traumatic stress to help them through their difficulties.

"But the vast majority of my members and employees are out there every day, every night, all the time, busting their humps at delivering a safe Canada for Canadians because they love the work and they love this country," Paulson said.

"These are the people I'm beholden to. And these are the people that deserve a respectful, supportive and enabling workplace."

Barton alleged a police officer hit him with a riot shield, knocking him to the ground, and that he was hit several more times, possibly with a baton.

But Weddell - who pleaded not guilty to assault causing bodily harm and assault with a weapon - testified the only contact he had with Barton that day was to help him off the ground.

In delivering his verdict today, Justice Gregory Ellies said while he had "concerns" about Weddell's testimony, he believes the officer would have remembered striking Barton.

He also said the only eyewitness in the case was "unreliable," which left some reasonable doubt.

May 31 2013

CALGARY, Alta. - Who ya gonna call when you find an old Dan Aykroyd movie in the dump?

Apparently, the police.

A worker at a Calgary landfill thought he had uncovered a snuff film when he found a piece of old movie footage that showed a man standing over a bloody body.

But once homicide investigators cleaned up the dirty images, they recognized the suspect as Aykroyd.

The Canadian actor, famous for starring in Hollywood blockbusters such as "Ghostbusters" and "The Blues Brothers," said through his agent that the film was from a lesser-known flick from 1990 called "Loose Cannons."

Police spokeswoman Emma Poole says the dump employee thought he was doing the right thing by turning over the film.

SATURDAY

JUNE 1, 2013

Jun 01 2013

OTTAWA - A West Coast RCMP lab that analyzes crime-related DNA samples is slow to deliver results, sometimes impeding court cases, says a new review.

"It took between three to four months for a DNA result from the time a sample was sent to the lab," says the study of the Vancouver lab, ordered by the federal Justice Department.

"Investigators felt that the average turnaround time was simply too long, and that it could be improved upon. ..."

"One of the reasons provided for why this amount of time was too long was related to pending court dates where results coming after a court date would not be helpful."

The RCMP's forensic labs, which include DNA testing, have come under sharp scrutiny in Parliament in recent years, after two reports from the auditor general and one from a Senate committee found they were poorly run and too often backlogged.

In May last year, the cash-strapped Mounties announced they were closing half their

THURSDAY

MAY 30, 2013

May 30 2013

HALIFAX - A 32-year-old woman is facing an attempted murder charged after a bizarre incident in the Dartmouth area.

Halifax Regional Police say officers were dispatched after a woman complained that a neighbour had almost hit her with their vehicle.

Police say two officers were in their car talking to a woman involved in the dispute at 6:20 p.m. when a speeding van crashed into the cruiser and hit the woman.

The injured pedestrian, a 46-year-old woman, was taken to hospital with serious injuries.

Police say the accused is also facing a charge of assault with a weapon.

FRIDAY

MAY 31, 2013

May 31 2013

TORONTO - The first Toronto police officer to go to trial on criminal charges stemming from the G20 protests has been found not guilty.

Const. Glenn Weddell was charged after Dorian Barton's shoulder was broken on June 16, 2010.

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labs - in Regina, Winnipeg and Halifax - to trim \$3.5 million a year from their budget, consolidating operations in Vancouver, Edmonton and Ottawa.

At the time, a spokeswoman for Public Safety Minister Vic Toews said the move would make the labs more efficient and reduce backlogs.

Turnaround times for DNA samples across the country rose in the mid-2000s, the auditor general found in a 2007 report, as the labs struggled to keep up with police demands. By 2006, police detectives were waiting almost 114 days on average for results.

The review of the Vancouver lab, which looked at 587 DNA files, found little change in turnaround times - an average of 107 days for the period 2006 to 2011. A few files took more than a year.

The researchers also found no clear rules about which DNA samples were shunted to the top of queue, whether by severity of the crime or pending court date.

"The lab ... confirmed that there was no real formal prioritizing policy in place, although informally, a case priority could be negotiated based in the specifics of the case."

The \$19,200 study, by three researchers at the University of Fraser Valley, reviewed DNA lab requests made by police departments in Vancouver and Abbotsford, B.C., as well as six RCMP detachments in B.C.'s Lower Mainland. Fifteen police investigators were also interviewed.

Almost two-thirds of the cases involved break-and-enters, and three-quarters were blood samples.

A spokeswoman for Justice Canada, Carole Saindon, said the study was ordered following a recommendation in a June 2010 Senate committee report that reviewed the DNA Identification Act.

Committee witnesses complained of the lack of hard data about how DNA results were affecting police investigations and court cases.

The RCMP says it uses a different methodology for calculating average turnaround times than was used for the Vancouver review, so numbers cannot be compared.

Sgt. Greg Cox said in an email that the force in 2009 introduced a new system to improve efficiency and DNA turnaround times, which have been reduced nationally from an average of 140 days in 2008-09 to 44 days in 2011-12, using the RCMP's methodology.

The RCMP's crime labs handle a range of forensic analysis, including fingerprints, ballistics, toxicology, blood-spatter, counterfeiting and DNA, which has become a key tool for police and prosecutors since 1988, when DNA evidence was first accepted in a Canadian courtroom.

An individual's unique DNA can be obtained from minute amounts of blood, semen, saliva, hair and teeth.

Ontario and Quebec, which operate their

own provincial police forces, have established separate forensic labs.

Jun 01 2013

SASKATOON - A Saskatchewan conservation officer who stopped to help first responders deal with a highway crash has died after being hit by a vehicle that was allegedly fleeing police.

RCMP say two Saskatchewan conservation officers stopped to help control traffic following a two-vehicle collision on Highway 11 south of Saskatoon late Friday afternoon.

While they were still at the scene, police say they received a report of a black SUV that was driving erratically and heading north toward the crash scene.

Police say traffic was lined up along the highway, and when an RCMP officer approached a vehicle matching the description of the SUV, it sped off.

Police say it continued through the crash scene and hit Justin Knackstedt, 23, of Watson, Saskatchewan, who died at the scene.

Mounties chased the SUV, but say they didn't catch it until it reached Saskatoon and rolled into a ditch.

Police say Blaine Thomas Taypotat, 35, of Saskatoon faces numerous charges in connection with the incident, including impaired driving causing death and flight from a police officer.

Taypotat remains in custody and is scheduled to appear in provincial court in Saskatoon on Monday.

**SUNDAY
JUNE 2, 2013**

Jun 02 2013

OTTAWA - On his way to becoming Canada's top cop, Bob Paulson told internal reviewers the national security certificate process for detaining suspected terrorists was "completely off the rails," newly released documents show.

In an interview with an auditor examining the controversial program, Paulson, now RCMP commissioner, expressed concerns about excessive state secrecy in certificate proceedings.

The national security certificate is a seldom-used tool for removing non-citizens suspected of terrorism or espionage from Canada.

"In my view, we over claim the protection of sources and methods and this is convenient if you can get away with it," say notes from the October 2009 interview, recently released under the Access to Information Act.

Paulson was assistant RCMP commissioner for national security at the time of the interview.

The discussion was part of a 2009-10 fed-

eral evaluation of the "relevance and performance" of the security certificate initiative, which had been revamped in 2008 after elements were found to be unconstitutional.

"The security certificate is an odd beast as it has come to be understood," Paulson told the interviewer. "If we had the threshold belief that we could take criminal action, we would do so."

When the review took place, four certificates had been on the books for several years, all against Muslim men accused of terrorist ties.

The government had withdrawn one certificate just a month earlier, in September 2009, in order to avoid sensitive intelligence being presented in court. Another certificate would be tossed out by the courts in early 2010.

Currently, three people arrested under security certificates - Mohamed Harkat of Algeria, and Mahmoud Jaballah and Mohamed Zeki Mahjoub, both from Egypt - are out on bail under strict surveillance as their cases slowly grind through the courts.

"If we were careful about how we brought the (security certificates) to bear upon these people it may have worked better," Paulson said in the interview. "As it is being applied now the (security certificate) is completely off the rails."

Paulson decried what he saw as a failure to make certificate detainees reasonably apprised of the case against them.

"Instead we are going to make the subject 'work' for the information. 'Take our word for it' approach," say the notes.

The internal records were obtained under the federal access law by Mike Larsen, a criminology instructor at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in British Columbia, who provided a copy to The Canadian Press.

In perhaps the most significant extremism case since Paulson took over, two non-citizens were charged in April under the Anti-Terrorism Act - not arrested using security certificates - for allegedly plotting to derail a passenger train.

In the 2009 interview, Paulson also took a swipe at the interdepartmental process for sharing input on the security certificate system.

"I would assess the co-ordination as being characteristic of typical departments involved in security. Siloed and self-interested," say the notes.

"Typically these interdepartmental initiatives are absent of leadership and decision-making ability. It usually turns on the goodwill of the participants rather than the co-operation delivered by leadership."

Portions of the two-page interview summary - including Paulson's recommendations for improving federal policy-making on the certificate program - were deemed too sensitive to disclose.

The RCMP has no additional comment, said Sgt. Greg Cox, a force spokesman.

The government revamped the certificate process after the Supreme Court of Canada

declared it unconstitutional in 2007. A key change was the addition of special advocates - lawyers who serve as watchdogs and test federal evidence against the person facing deportation.

The Supreme Court of Canada has agreed to revisit the question of just how open the process should be in response to a challenge brought by Harkat.

MONDAY
JUNE 3, 2013

Jun 03 2013

OTTAWA - The RCMP has renamed one of its key units and formally charged it with fighting corruption cases at home and abroad.

RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson says the new National Division replaces what used to be known as A Division.

In addition to corruption cases, it will also provide protection to Canadian dignitaries domestically and internationally and protect designated sites in the Ottawa region.

The Mounties say the division will strengthen the force's ability to investigate and mitigate significant threats.

The RCMP is subdivided into a number of divisions, most of which concentrate on various geographic areas.

For example, O Division is responsible for Ontario.

The new National Division will be based in Ottawa, but will have a much broader reach.

Paulson says the division is committed to safeguarding the country's political, economic and social integrity.

"Canadians value the integrity of our democratic institutions and I know National Division is up to the challenge of carrying out this responsibility," he said in a news release.

Jun 03 2013

MONTREAL - Quebec's premier has called it a "terrible and disheartening and sad" situation in the province's third-largest municipality.

Pauline Marois has commented on her government's decision to place scandal-plagued Laval under trusteeship.

The decision was made official at a cabinet meeting today.

Laval's former mayor is accused of running the city like a criminal racket and now faces gangsterism charges.

Now, the new interim mayor is alleged to have also taken part in illegal party financing. He has denied the allegation, levelled last week in testimony at the Charbonneau inquiry.

But this latest scandal to hit the city was enough for the government to impose trusteeship. That means the provincial government will get final say over municipal decisions.

Jun 03 2013

OTTAWA - The federal government says it will take steps to deny people without status in Canada the possibility of a criminal pardon after reviewing the recent case of a man charged with terrorist offences.

The office of Public Safety Minister Vic Toews says it is unacceptable that inadmissible foreign nationals are able to get criminal record suspensions.

The office says it is moving to ensure people without status in Canada cannot use what it considers a loophole in the law to abuse Canada's immigration system.

Raed Jaser, 35, of Toronto, and Chiheb Esseghaier, 30, of Montreal, face terrorism-related charges for allegedly plotting to derail a Via passenger train.

Jaser came to Canada with his family as a teenager in 1993 and ran into trouble with the law, but apparently obtained a criminal pardon, now known as a record suspension.

That allowed him to remain in Canada and eventually obtain landed immigrant status.

TUESDAY
JUNE 4, 2013

Jun 04 2013

CALGARY - A report into the fatal shooting of an armed robbery suspect by RCMP in an Alberta mountain community says it couldn't have been prevented.

Mounties shot Steven Boucher, who was 63, on a Canmore street following several robberies in January 2011.

Boucher got out of his vehicle and was carrying a replica of a 9-mm Smith and Wesson semi-automatic pistol.

Judge Peter Barley, who headed a fatality inquiry, says officers followed procedure to the letter and believed the weapon to be real.

Boucher was suspected in several robberies in the town on the eastern edge of Banff National Park.

The judge had no recommendations.

Jun 04 2013

A former top-ranking Quebec provincial police officer was arrested this week for allegedly receiving payments from a secret expense fund.

Denis Despelteau, 61, faces counts of fraud, breach of trust, forging documents and theft from the government, according to an arrest warrant obtained by QMI Agency.

Investigators believe Despelteau was paid under the table from the account for consulting work following his retirement.

The alleged offences occurred between January 1, 2011, and December 31, 2012.

Despelteau, a former chief staff inspector, was to be arraigned on Tuesday.

When the scandal came to light last fall, Quebec ordered an investigation led by former RCMP, provincial police and Montreal police officers.

Provincial police director Richard Deschesnes was suspended without pay and two former assistants were also suspended.

The secret spending account is usually earmarked for operations such as drug transactions by undercover officers.

(QMI Agency)

Jun 04 2013

TORONTO - Toronto police say a search of a farm belonging to a murder suspect didn't turn up any evidence in the case of a missing 23-year-old woman.

Laura Babcock was last seen on June 26, 2012 and police say phone records show she had contact with Toronto man Dellen Millard on July 3.

Millard, 27, is facing charges including first-degree murder in the death of Tim Bosma, who was killed after leaving his home on May 6 to take two men for a test drive in a truck he was trying to sell online.

The Hamilton man's remains were found burned beyond recognition at Millard's farm in the Waterloo, Ont., area.

Police say an "area of interest" on Millard's farm was identified and no evidence was found in the disappearance of Babcock, who was working as an Internet escort.

After Millard's arrest last month Toronto homicide detectives looked at the connection between Millard and Babcock, who they say were romantically linked, though not in a "traditional dating relationship."

Investigators are also taking another look at the suicide of Millard's father, who died Nov. 29, 2012.

Another man, Mark Smich, 25, is also charged with first-degree murder in the Bosma case.

Jun 04 2013

TROIS-RIVIERES, Que. - The union representing four police officers suspended for allegedly beating a robbery suspect wants them reinstated, with pay.

The union insists the city council in Trois-Rivieres, Que., ignored the presumption of innocence when it expanded the municipal officers' suspension to take away their pay.

Union president Louis Lesage says the officers' families are in disarray after being deprived of their income.

The officers were suspended with pay on Feb. 8, but city council revised the suspension to one without pay in a decision at their Monday night council meeting.

Lesage says the union will attempt to help the officers financially and challenge the suspensions if city council doesn't reverse its decision.

Police officers Marc-Andre St-Amant, Barbara Provencher, Dominic Pronovost and

Kaven Deslauriers face seven charges, including assault with a weapon, assault causing bodily harm, negligent use of a firearm, fabricating police reports and obstruction of justice.

There are also charges against the original suspect, Alexis Vadeboncoeur, who is accused of armed robbery at a pharmacy.

A surveillance video shows four people beating a man in a parking lot on Feb. 2. The incident attracted international attention once the video hit the Internet.

The video shows a young man dropping a weapon and laying on the ground, face down. Police officers arrive running, and level a flurry of punches and kicks.

Police say in their report that the man resisted arrest.

Vadeboncoeur alleges that he was struck in the head and the genitals.

Jun 04 2013

VANCOUVER - A full-patch member of the Hells Angels chapter in Nanaimo, B.C., has succeeded in getting charges of extortion and theft stayed after a judge ruled his charter rights were violated because the case took too long to get to trial.

Frederick Widdifield's lawyer argued that the Crown and circumstances involving his client's three co-accused were to blame for the delay.

Widdifield and three others linked to the Hells Angels were charged in October 2010, and the trial was scheduled to start in October 2012 but was then put off until this fall.

B.C. Supreme Court Justice Robert Johnston said in a written ruling issued Tuesday that the Crown contributed to the delay with its errors in disclosure and should have proceeded to trial against Widdifield alone instead of with his co-accused.

Johnston said a lawyer for another full-patch Hells Angels member, Raj Sandhu, was in a conflict of interest because she had earlier advised police in a related investigation called Project Halo.

He said there was a further delay when the trial was supposed to start last fall when the lawyer for Hells Angels enforcer Jeffrey Benvin needed heart surgery.

All of it has caused stress for Widdifield, who couldn't travel to the U.S. with his wife because of the charges against him, the judge noted.

Jun 06 2013

VANCOUVER - Vancouver police have come under fire again over how the department enforces bylaws in the city's most impoverished neighbourhood compared with its wealthier communities.

The VPD handed out 2,050 jaywalking tickets in the Downtown Eastside over the last four years, according to statistics



obtained through a Freedom of Information request and released Thursday by two advocacy groups.

But no tickets were issued over the same period in the tony neighbourhoods of Dunbar/Southlands or Kerrisdale.

The two groups that filed the FOI — Pivot Legal Society and the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users — are demanding police explain the reason for the disparity.

It's the second time this year that the activists have decried discriminatory policing in the city's poorest neighbourhood.

In March, Pivot said the numbers of tickets issued for street vending in the Downtown Eastside between 2008 and 2012 were much higher than any other neighbourhood, but VPD spokesman Const. Brian Montague said police were "absolutely not" discriminating and that other areas of the city don't have the same street vending problem.

On Thursday, Montague noted that officers frequently encounter the problem of jaywalking in the Downtown Eastside.

In an email, he said there is an expectation by the public that police will enforce the law.

"When an officer observes an offence such as jaywalking and stops someone, the officer has the ability to write a ticket," he said. "The act of jaywalking is dangerous and the ticket is intended to educate and deter individuals from committing the offence and possibly getting hit by a car and either injured or killed."

Pivot lawyer Doug King said they did expect the number of jaywalkers to be higher in the area, but that they were surprised to find that there had been no tickets issued in other areas of the city.

"The issue is that if you look at the other neighbourhoods there is no enforcement," he said. "Pedestrian safety shouldn't just be an issue in the Downtown Eastside. There are people jaywalking everywhere."

King said the groups believe that more people are being issued tickets in the Downtown Eastside so that police have a legitimate reason to run identification checks, although he admits that it is difficult to prove that claim.

The data released by Pivot show that 76 per cent of the city's jaywalking tickets and 31 per cent of panhandling tickets were given to people in the Downtown Eastside.

"We believe these statistics confirm our

fears that city bylaws are not being enforced for reasons of public safety, but to circumvent the constitutional protections in this country against profiling and arbitrary detention," said King.

(Vancouver Sun)

WEDNESDAY
JUNE 5, 2013

Jun 05 2013

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. - The Special Investigations Unit has been called in to probe a shooting in Ottawa that sent a 20-year-old man to hospital.

The agency says officers were called to the city's east end at about 6 p.m. Tuesday (near Innes Rd. and Tenth Line Rd.) after receiving numerous calls.

There was an interaction between an officer and the man resulting in the officer firing his gun and striking the man twice.

The unidentified man is in Ottawa Civic Hospital in stable condition.

The SIU has assigned four investigators and two forensic investigators to probe the circumstances of this incident.

Jun 05 2013

CHARLOTTETOWN - A 25-year veteran of the RCMP in Prince Edward Island has been accused of stealing prescription drugs from a police locker.

The Mounties said they laid charges against one of their own following an investigation that began last Friday after the commander of the King's District noticed some "irregularities" with some of the exhibits stored in a secure room.

The problem was first detected by an investigator who wanted to review an exhibit and realized the items he had seized weren't there, Sgt. Andrew Blackadar said Wednesday.

"The only exhibits that had been tampered with were a couple of packages in relation to prescription pills," Blackadar said.

Blackadar couldn't say how many pills were missing, but said police believe they were taken for personal use over the past two or three months.

Cpl. Blair Ross, who was responsible for the care and handling of police exhibits at the Montague detachment, faces charges of breach of trust, theft and possession of a controlled substance.

Ross has been suspended with pay and is to appear in provincial court in Georgetown on July 25.

Jun 05 2013

SURREY, B.C. - British Columbia's police watchdog has forwarded a report to Crown counsel after a Vancouver Island woman was injured during her arrest by Mounties.

The woman was taken into custody in Port Alberni on Feb. 15 after RCMP officers determined she may have not been compliant with a court order.

But the Independent Investigations Office says she suffered a leg injury during her arrest and was assessed by the BC Ambulance Services in police cells before being transferred to hospital.

The police watchdog says it began looking into the event because of information it received one week after the incident.

The agency says it forwards reports to prosecutors when its chief civilian director believes an officer may have committed an offence, although the report includes no recommendations on charges.

The police watchdog says Crown counsel will now determine whether an offence occurred and whether it can be proven in court beyond a reasonable doubt.

Jun 05 2013

ABBOTSFORD, B.C. - Homeless people living in one community in British Columbia's Fraser Valley can rightfully argue their treatment by city officials actually stinks.

The City of Abbotsford's manager has apologized after workers recently spread chicken manure on a homeless camp.

George Murray has issued a statement, taking responsibility for how the city dealt with the issue.

He says city workers will remove the manure and work with local stakeholders to find a solution to issue.

Neither Murray nor Mayor Bruce Banman were available for comment on the incident. (CKNW)

Jun 05 2013

WASHINGTON - Britain's Guardian newspaper says the National Security Agency is currently collecting the telephone records of millions of U.S. customers of Verizon under a secret court order.

The newspaper said Wednesday the order was issued in April and was good until July 19. The newspaper said the order requires Verizon on an "ongoing, daily basis" to give the NSA information on all telephone calls in its systems, both within the U.S. and between the U.S. and other countries.

The newspaper said the document shows for the first time that under the Obama administration the communication records of millions of U.S. citizens are being collected indiscriminately and in bulk, regardless of whether they are suspected of any wrongdoing.

The White House, NASA and Verizon all declined to comment.

Jun 05 2013

MONTREAL - When local police came calling with child porn allegations last

January, former Saint John city councillor Donnie Snook fled his house clutching a laptop. It was clear that the computer contained damning data. Six months later, police have finally gathered enough evidence to land him in jail for a long time to come.

With a case seemingly so cut and dry, why the lag time? Couldn't the police do a simple search for the incriminating info and level charges ASAP? Easier said than done. With computing devices storing terabytes of personal data, it can take months before enough evidence can be cobbled together from reams of documents, emails, chat logs and text messages.

That's all about to change thanks to a new technique developed by researchers at Concordia University, who have slashed the data-crunching time. What once took months now takes minutes.

Gaby Dagher and Benjamin Fung, researchers with the Concordia Institute for Information Systems Engineering, will soon publish their findings in Data & Knowledge Engineering. Law enforcement officers are already putting this research to work through Concordia's partnership with Canada's National Cyber-Forensics and Training Alliance, in which law enforcement organizations, private companies, and academic institutions work together to share information to stop emerging cyber threats and mitigate existing ones.

Thanks to Dagher and Fung, crime investigators can now extract hidden knowledge from a large volume of text. The researchers' new methods automatically identify the criminal topics discussed in the textual conversation, show which participants are most active with respect to the identified criminal topics, and then provide a visualization of the social networks among the participants.

Dagher, who is a PhD candidate supervised by Fung, explains "the huge increase in cybercrimes over the past decade boosted demand for special forensic tools that let investigators look for evidence on a suspect's computer by analyzing stored text. Our new technique allows an investigator to cluster documents by producing overlapping groups, each corresponding to a specific subject defined by the investigator."

Fung says that, "out of all the types of available data in cybercrime investigation, text data is the most common medium used by scammers, identity thieves and child exploitation criminals. But this type of data is also the most challenging to analyze. It's really hard make a software program automatically interpret the underlying meaning of the text."

The researchers have also developed a new search engine to help investigators identify the relevant documents from a large volume of text. Says Dagher, "In a normal search engine, a user enters some keywords and results can vary - widely. In contrast, our search en-

gine captures the suspects' vocabulary, and then uses it to improve the accuracy of the search results. Just like some cultures are said to have over 50 words for snow, criminals might have 50 words for... snow of a different kind! This search engine allows investigators to pick up on those nuances and quickly identify the incriminating documents."

"Experiments using real-life criminal data already suggest that our approach is much more effective than the traditional methods," says Dagher. This new method of quickly sifting through huge amounts of text to zero in on the evidence could soon be used by law enforcement agencies around the world, meaning future cybercriminals can go to trial much more quickly, saving time for the police - as well as money for tax-payers. (EurekAlert)



HALIFAX - Halifax Regional Police say the number of serious incidents in the capital city's downtown bar district has dropped by more than half over the past year.

Last June, the department launched their strategy to target assaults and public intoxication in the capital city's downtown bar district.

Under the program, three teams of two officers each don high-visibility vests, walk the streets and go through downtown bars in the early morning hours of Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

In the past year, police recorded 32 serious assaults in the downtown core, compared with 75 in the previous June-to-June period. (Halifax Chronicle-Herald)

Jun 06 2013

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. - Ontario's police watchdog says a Toronto police officer has been charged in connection with injuries suffered by a man during an arrest three years ago.

The Special Investigations Unit says it launched its probe into the April 2010 arrest of Rudolph Raymond Costain, 30, after learning of the incident through media reports this March.

The SIU says its investigation determined Costain was struck a number of times by an officer during his arrest on April 12, 2010 in Toronto.

He was taken to hospital for treatment of head injuries.

Const. Christian Dobbs is facing one charge of assault causing bodily harm and is to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Toronto on July 17.

Jun 06 2013

HALIFAX - Nova Scotia's justice minister has appointed the director of his

department's public safety investigations to lead a new unit that will investigate cyberbullying.

Ross Landry says Roger Merrick has been named the director of the team of five investigators, set to be in operation this fall.

Merrick, a former police officer, also runs the civil forfeiture unit and the provincial firearms safety program.

The unit will investigate all complaints of cyberbullying, whether the victim is a youth or an adult.

Landry says it can attempt to resolve complaints informally by contacting the people involved, or it can seek a cyberbullying prevention order that would force someone to stop communicating with another.

If criminal charges are warranted, the unit will refer the case to police.

Jun 06 2013

WINNIPEG - The Manitoba government is going to fund another five RCMP officers this year and put another \$1 million into crime prevention and victims' services.

The money comes from criminal property seizures and much of it will be used to pay for new police equipment such as ballistic helmets and roadside emergency signs.

Some of the cash will be used to pay travel costs for relatives of homicide victims who have to attend court.

The province is now one-third of the way to fulfilling a 2011 election promise to add 150 officers and cadets across Manitoba.

Justice Minister Andrew Swan says the government will do everything it can to meet that commitment.

One hurdle has been establishing cadet programs in rural areas.

Jun 06 2013

MIDHURST, Ont. - Ontario's top pathologist is calling the death of a mentally ill man who died after police shot him with a Taser an "index case" where the use of the electric stun gun was a key factor.

Dr. Michael Pollanen says he had never seen a case where "you could link a Taser as a factor in death" until he conducted a post-mortem on Aron Firman, who died in June 2010 after an encounter with Ontario Provincial Police.

Pollanen adds however, that while the case is a first, at least in Ontario, there's unlikely to be uniform agreement on his findings.

While testifying at an inquest into Firman's death, Pollanen notes that the Tasing of the 27-year-old was the "most immediate factor" in his death, but not the only factor.

He describes Firman's cause of death as "cardiac arrhythmia precipitated by electronic control device deployment in an agitated schizophrenic man."

But he also says Firman had a slightly enlarged heart - but not a specific heart disease

- and carried a gene which may possibly have made his heart more vulnerable to injury.

Ontario's Special Investigations Unit has taken Pollanen's finding to mean that the deployment of the Taser primarily caused Firman's death.

The inquest is considered significant because it's one of the rare cases in which a death has been attributed predominantly to the use of a Taser by police.

The proceedings are examining the events around Firman's death and could make recommendations aimed at preventing similar deaths.

The inquest began in April and was expected to hear from about 20 witnesses.

Pollanen was to be cross-examined on Thursday by lawyers representing Tasers International and Firman's family. His parents were both present at the proceedings.

Firman was a resident at a group home in Collingwood, Ont., at the time of his death.

A December 2010 report from the SIU found there were no reasonable grounds to charge an OPP officer with a criminal offence.

On June 24, 2010, two OPP officers were sent to the group home due to an assault complaint about Firman and found him sitting in a chair outdoors.

Both officers attempted to speak to "an agitated" Firman, according to the SIU report. When they moved to apprehend him Firman got out of his chair and "moved aggressively" towards an officer, the report said.

The second officer tried to intervene but was unable to do so as Firman hit her in the face with his elbow, said the report. Firman then moved toward the first officer who responded by discharging his Taser gun at him.

Firman was able to take a few additional steps before falling to the ground and losing consciousness, the report said. He was taken to an area hospital where he was pronounced dead.

In commenting on the case, the SIU director singled out the use of the Taser on Firman.

"In this incident, the Taser's deployment in my view caused Mr. Firman's death," Ian Scott said in his report.

While noting the responding officers had the authority to arrest Firman for assault and had not done anything wrong, Scott pointed out that the Taser is characterized "as a less lethal or intermediate weapon."

"The subject officer could have reasonably thought that the Taser deployment would not be lethal based upon his training," he wrote.

"In these circumstances, and in light of Mr. Firman's demonstrated degree of aggression, I am of the opinion that the Taser's deployment was not excessive, notwithstanding the fact that it caused Mr. Firman's demise."

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