

**Letter to the Editor – Province Newspaper  
February 28, 2009**

**Re: Mounties not doing themselves any favours.**

I read your column in Friday's Province and can't help but respond.

<http://www.theprovince.com/Mounties+doing+themselves+favours/1335100/story.html>

As the President of the British Columbia Police Association, I represent front-line municipal police officers in various communities throughout this Province. We also encourage our RCMP colleagues to participate in our organization while serving in British Columbia.

Your suggestion that the RCMP officer's involved in this incident and their actions are some how jeopardizing the safety of police officers across the country is ridiculous and amounts to nothing more than another cheap attempt to capitalize on what was truly a tragic incident.

It is clear that this incident occurred and that the RCMP were involved; I have never once heard the RCMP suggest otherwise.

The purpose of an inquiry is to thoroughly examine an incident where there are unanswered questions. That's exactly what is happening in this inquiry and that is why you are now hearing about events that occurred for the first time. To somehow suggest that this means there was a cover up is irresponsible. Moreover, if as you suggest, the 'critical incident debriefing' was intended to provide the officers the opportunity to get 'their stories straight' then how do you explain how different their evidence is? I would instead suggest that these officers, despite being in the untenable position of having already been 'condemned' by the media and others, are trying to provide Mr. Braidwood their best recollection of what occurred during a dynamic, stressful and likely terrifying situation; one that no one else at the airport had been able or willing to resolve that day.

As far as your comments regarding what in your view is an unfounded 'claim' that 'four big cops' were threatened by 'a confused and agitated man with a stapler' is some how insulting to 'officers from all the forces in the lower mainland' are not only wrong but you are wholly unqualified to make such a claim.

Officers in the lower mainland are assaulted and injured everyday by 'confused and agitated' people. Most of them are people in crisis and come from all walks of life. Objects are often used including chains, locks, furniture, stationary, or any other movable object that a violent person can access. There are many reasons why people find themselves in these situations but it happens. Unfortunately our members are called to deal with them at a time when all others have failed and when any crisis is most acute and very difficult to resolve. Sometimes the outcome can mean serious injuries to police or to an individual the police are trying to gain control of; tragically in some cases the outcome can be death.

What does however jeopardize the safety of our members is the media's continued practice of sensational and provocative coverage of these tragedies while playing fast and loose with the truth. Oh by the way; so far no pathologist or coroner has identified the Taser as having caused death in this case or any of the others that you refer to in your column.

Maybe there will be a ban on Tasers; if there is I can assure you that my colleagues won't be blaming these officers.

Its ironic that the reason we do have the taser today is because of the hue and cry years ago that police should have alternatives to physical or deadly force. Here we are today listening to you and others complain that we didn't use physical force.

If the taser is banned, I wonder how you'll be reporting on the deaths and injuries that occur then?

By Tom Stamatakis, President  
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