

Five officers identified in G20 beating: police chief



Darren Stone/Postmedia News

Toronto police chief Bill Blair speaks about last summer's G20 summit at a press conference in Victoria, B.C. on Dec. 8, 2010.

[Kenyon Wallace](#) December 8, 2010 – 8:00 pm

Toronto's embattled police chief, seeking to re-assure the public that officers would be held accountable for their actions at the G20 summit, says new evidence has allowed investigators to identify five officers alleged to have taken part in the arrest and beating of 27-year-old protester Adam Nobody.

Speaking at a hastily arranged press conference in Victoria, B.C., where he was attending a conference, Chief Bill Blair responded Wednesday to the Ontario ombudsman's scathing report of police behaviour during the summit, as well as new video footage of Mr. Nobody's beating that surfaced this week showing a previously unidentified officer's face.

"I want to assure Torontonians first, but all Canadians, that we are absolutely committed to open and transparent accountability of our police officers for their actions," he told reporters. "If there is evidence of misconduct among our police officers, that misconduct will be dealt with.

"People may not be happy with the pace, but I want to assure people that we're pursuing that with all vigour."

Chief Blair said investigators from the force's professional standards unit were able to identify five officers involved in Mr. Nobody's June 26 arrest thanks to new photographic evidence published in the Toronto Star, including stills from a video shot by an unnamed University of Toronto student showing the face of an officer who appears to strike Mr. Nobody repeatedly with a baton.

The chief said the officers' identities will be handed over to the province's Special Investigations Unit, which is currently investigating whether police engaged in criminal behaviour during Mr. Nobody's arrest. In its initial investigation, the SIU concluded police likely used excessive force, but were unable to lay charges because it could not identify the officers involved.

Chief Blair also attempted to temper comments made by Ontario Ombudsman Andre Marin that he received "zero cooperation" from Toronto police during his office's investigation into the so-called secret rule that gave police the mistaken impression they could arrest anyone who came within five metres of the G20 security perimeter.

"We [cooperated] to the extent as appropriate," Chief Blair said. "Our cooperation was limited to those things that the ombudsman was responsible for, which was primarily the provincial processes by which that regulation was passed and communicated."

On Tuesday, Mr. Marin said the rule, enacted under the obscure 1939 Public Works Protection Act June 2 by the Ontario government without debate, was "likely illegal and unconstitutional" and one that led to the "most massive compromise of civil liberties in Canadian history."

"There was a premeditated, conscious, planned decision not to announce the existence of the regulation or the reviving of this wartime act, this relic," Mr. Marin said.

In his own press conference yesterday, Premier Dalton McGuinty, speaking publicly for the first time since Mr. Marin's scathing indictment, told reporters his government "failed to communicate" the new rule and "moved too quickly" in enacting it.

"We did not take the time to fully reflect on the consequences of this new regulation," said Mr. McGuinty. "This was an extraordinary regulation and it deserved more transparency and more debate."

Chief Blair admitted he also could have done a better job of communicating the rule to the public after questions over the rule's interpretation arose on the Friday before the summit.

“I want to be able to assure people ... the information that I shared was an honest belief of what I’d been told was true,” he said.

Mr. Nobody’s lawyer, Julian Falconer, wasn’t satisfied with Chief Blair’s assurances, saying nothing has changed since the chief apologized last week for suggesting Mr. Nobody was armed and violent at the time of his arrest.

“In the five days since the apology, all the chief has done is read the media and identify those that everyone in the city is capable of identifying,” Mr. Falconer said. “There is nothing new in the chief’s press conference other than the fact that he is capable of reading newspapers. Why is it he needs the public to identify the men and women who work with him?”

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