

Toronto officer charged in G20 assault

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Police were criticized for their use of force during the G20 summit. (Canadian Press)

A Toronto police officer has been arrested and charged with assaulting a protester during the G20 summit in June.

It is the first arrest of a police officer in connection with allegations of the use of excessive force during the summit.

Const. Babak Andalib-Goortani was charged Tuesday with assault with a weapon. The charges relate to the treatment of Adam Nobody by police on the evening of June 26, said a statement released Tuesday by the province's Special Investigations Unit.

Nobody was one of about 1,000 people arrested during the two-day summit.

During his arrest at Queen's Park, Nobody suffered a fracture below his right eye and a broken nose.

Nobody pursued two charges of police brutality against the arresting officers, but in November the SIU said although it believed excessive force had been used, it could not identify the suspect officers.

The SIU is an arm's-length agency and is called in whenever there are situations of death or serious injury involving police.

In its initial investigation, the SIU used a YouTube video that showed Nobody's arrest, but investigators said the video didn't show the officers clearly enough to identify them.

The video shows Nobody being swarmed and at least one officer making a punching motion toward him.

Two officers were designated as subject officers during the SIU investigation, but they would not agree to be interviewed, which they have the right to refuse.

Toronto police Chief Bill Blair appeared on CBC Radio and questioned the veracity of the YouTube video.

Police forensically examined the tape and found it had been "tampered" with, Blair said.

Videographer swears affidavit

"The evidence that they're relying on is false. It's been edited. A significant portion of it has been removed," he said on CBC's *Metro Morning*.

"And I think that portion ... removes any opportunity for a reasonable explanation of the force that was used."

Blair said his impression was that the officers were arresting a "violent, armed offender. The use of that weapon has been removed from that tape."

Blair's allegations prompted John Bridge, the Toronto man who had shot the video, to come forward and swear in an affidavit that the video had not been tampered with — only that he had turned his camera off for a few seconds because he thought he might have to retreat from advancing police.

Blair apologized a few days later and retracted his statements saying there was no evidence there was ever any "intent to mislead."

The SIU reopened its investigation and soon announced it had received two more videos of Nobody's arrest and Toronto police had provided investigators with the names of 15 officers who might have been in the vicinity or involved in the arrest.

The SIU singled out three of those officers, but they refused to give statements. The other 12 officers said they could not identify the officers in the video.

Toronto police then provided the name of one more witness police officer, who identified one of the three officers as Andalib-Goortani, according to the SIU.

In its statement, the SIU said it wanted to "thank videographer John Bridge for coming forward and sharing both the manner in which he shot his video, permitting himself to be identified and providing the [SIU] with his original video footage of the incident."

Glad charge laid

As for the second allegation of police mistreatment by Nobody, which he says happened after his arrest, SIU director Ian Scott said Tuesday he "remains of the view that there is insufficient corroborative evidence around this allegation to reasonably believe that an offence occurred."

Nobody said in a statement released Tuesday evening that he is glad a charge has been laid.

"I am relieved that at least one of the officers involved in my arrest will face justice," said Nobody.

"It is now time for the justice system to do its work."

Nobody and his lawyers said the investigation should go further.

"What I still don't understand is how 12 police officers who were around me when I was arrested aren't able to identify anyone," he said.\

"I hope that something can still be done about this," he said.

His lawyer, Julian Falconer, accused the witness officers of scuttling the SIU investigation to help out other officers. He called on Blair to help the SIU identify any other officers involved in using force against Nobody.

Andalib-Goortani is scheduled to appear in court Jan. 24 on the assault with a weapon charge.