



## Toronto police were overwhelmed at G20, review reveals

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*Riot police move through a downtown alley during the G20 summit in Toronto on June 25, 2010.*

In the first significant admission things went wrong during the G20 summit last year, Toronto police say they did not have the right tactics to effectively handle the Black Bloc, were so overwhelmed at a temporary detention centre that some prisoners were never given access to a lawyer and that in future officers should not box in protesters without leaving an exit.

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They have also revealed the exact moment commanders ordered the streets cleared: At 7:35 p.m. on June 26, the primary day of protests, officers at the Major Incident Command Centre at police headquarters gave the order to arrest all protesters who had not dispersed, for breach of the peace.

The findings are contained in a review of policing at the summit released by Chief Bill Blair Thursday and collectively paint a picture of a force underprepared, despite the millions spent on G20 security.

It also contains new numbers: 1,118 people were arrested, more than previously reported; 39 arrestees reported being injured, five of whom had to be treated in hospital; and 97 police officers were injured. At times, fully half of the Toronto Police Services uniformed officers were occupied by the G20.

Police accountability advocates, however, said the review was only a beginning.

“For those of us following the G20, this is nothing new, but it’s a step forward to hear Chief Bill Blair recognize this in a report. It’s not enough, but it’s a step,” said Penelope Chester, a spokeswoman for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

When about 1,000 people broke away from a peaceful labour march and started smashing property, riot police were unable to keep up with them, the review found. In one case, when officers attempted to head the group off, they could not get into position quickly enough. Police tactics, such as forming cordons or using arrest squads, were designed for stationary crowds, it said.

Throughout that night and the next day, police boxed in, or “kettled,” groups of protesters and arrested them in an attempt to regain control of the streets.

Once they were brought to the temporary detention centre, at a converted film studio on Eastern Avenue, detainees sometimes waited more than 24 hours. The use of two different processing systems – one by court officials running the centre and one by police – combined with a dearth of staff created a backlog, meaning some people never saw an officer who could assess their medical condition or give them access to a lawyer.

What’s more, staff lost track of when they had been fed and where their property ended up.

The report remained silent on several issues, including the searches conducted blocks from the summit and what role, if any, RCMP commanders in the Integrated Security Unit played in decision-making during those days.

Critics said it fell far short of admitting responsibility for problems, glossed over allegations police had not co-operated with investigations into their conduct at the summit, and did not provide enough detail about what had been done to hold individual officers accountable.

“It’s like diagnosing someone with a cold when they’re dealing with a gunshot wound,” said David Midanik, a lawyer working on one of two class-action lawsuits against police. “There’s nothing about the police mindset, the ISU structure, the overall systemic contempt for the Charter of Rights.”

Julian Falconer, a prominent human rights lawyer involved in G20 cases, argued the police reasoning for rounding people up was faulty.

“The truth of the matter is, simply being present doesn’t constitute a breach of the peace,” he said. “I would hardly define this [review] as a hard look at police deficiencies.”