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Hot Pockets heir gets five-month prison sentence in U.S. college-admissions scam



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Senior RCMP officers who approved an undercover operation that lured a Quebec man into buying heroin in Thailand have acknowledged in recently filed court documents that the project was conducted with no concern that it would put a Canadian citizen in danger of getting a death sentence from the Thai authorities.

The court documents filed in a Quebec Superior Court civil suit also show that the RCMP mistook their suspect for his drug-trafficking twin brother when the force's undercover agents went after him.

The man the RCMP targeted, a drug addict with no previous criminal record named Alain Olivier, was sentenced to death in a Bangkok court. He later received a Thai royal pardon, and his sentence was commuted to

40 years in prison.

Now back in Montreal on parole after eight years in a Bangkok jail, Mr. Olivier is suing the RCMP, saying he was unfairly ensnared in a sting operation.

Code-named Deception, the scheme has been controversial because undercover RCMP Corporal Derek Flanagan died during a botched drug purchase in Chiang Mai. Mr. Olivier, who had arranged the transaction, was arrested and handed over to the Thai police.

Transcripts of examinations for discovery were filed in court this week, including the deposition of former chief superintendent Frank Palmer, who, as officer in charge of federal operations in Vancouver, was one of the senior Mounties who approved the operation.

Mr. Palmer retired in 1997 after reaching the rank of deputy commissioner of the RCMP.

"It didn't bother you about bringing a Canadian citizen to Thailand to be arrested in Thailand for a crime you knew carried the death penalty? That didn't bother you at all?" Mr. Olivier's lawyer asked Mr. Palmer.

"No," he replied.

Mr. Palmer's remarks were echoed in a different discovery session by another retired RCMP officer, superintendent Neil Pouliot, who was in charge of international drug operations at Ottawa headquarters.

"Did you not have any concern that you would be assisting the Thai police to bring on the death sentence of a Canadian citizen in this buy-

and -bust scenario for Operation Deception?" Mr. Pouliot was asked.

"None at all," he said.

Also filed in court are RCMP memos from the time that repeatedly refer to Mr. Olivier by his twin brother's fingerprint number (called an FPS) and describe Mr. Olivier as a major drug trafficker.

"I guess because there was an FPS number there, I was of the opinion that he had a criminal record," Mr. Palmer said in discovery.

National Parole Board documents obtained by The Globe and Mail back up Mr. Olivier's claim that he did not have a criminal record until his arrest in Thailand.

In discovery, Mr. Palmer conceded that, "I think, as the file developed, it's clear that he [Mr. Olivier]. . . was probably less of a major importer and trafficker than he professed to be."

Other officers involved in the undercover operation played down the identification error.

"That was a mistake, nothing more. There's nothing sinister there," Staff-Sergeant Jack Dop said during discovery this fall when he was asked about the FPS error.

He and other officers questioned during pretrial discovery say that, even without a record, Mr. Olivier, who was living in British Columbia at the time of the operation, was worth targeting because he agreed to go to Thailand to buy heroin.

At the same time, the officers also portrayed Mr. Olivier as a penniless man who did odd jobs, rather than a major criminal. The officers said Mr. Olivier came to their attention thanks to an informant, Glenn Barry, alias Jean-Marie Leblanc, whose credibility has been attacked in other court proceedings.

It was only after Mr. Olivier was behind bars in Bangkok that Canadian authorities realized he had no previous criminal record.

In a Sept. 6, 1989, Telex from Ottawa, the RCMP liaison officer at the embassy in Bangkok is told: "Be advised that a search for criminal records was conducted by identification services which proved negative. A reply to this effect is being sent to Olivier."

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