

Drug trafficker gets 30-year jail sentence

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By GERRY BELLETT

Alain Olivier should be forced to serve his entire 30-year prison term in Thailand, says RCMP Corp. Jim Girdlestone.

Girdlestone arrested Olivier, a Vancouver drug trafficker, in Thailand during a fight that led to the death of Vancouver drug squad member Corp. Derek Flanagan.

Olivier was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment this week.

"There's a prisoner exchange program between Canada and Thailand but I certainly hope he isn't repatriated. I don't feel the Canadian taxpayers should have to foot the bill for his custody," said Girdlestone.

"He committed his crime in Thailand and that's where he should stay," he said. "Personally, I think he should have hanged."

A Bangkok court originally sentenced Olivier, 30, and five Thai nationals to death for conspiracy to traffic in heroin.

Two of the Thais — a brother and sister — were also found guilty of criminal negligence in the operation of a motor vehicle resulting in Flanagan's death.

But following local custom their sentences were automatically commuted to life imprisonment — in effect a prison term of 30 years without prospect of parole — after the six admitted their guilt to the judicial tribunal.

Girdlestone, Flanagan, Sgt. Jack Dop and Corp. Barry Bennett were part of an undercover team operating in Thailand with local police against an international heroin smuggling ring.

On Feb. 19, 1989, Olivier brought Flanagan, Girdlestone and Bennett to a meeting with Thai drug traffickers, three of whom were a brother and his two sisters.

The Thais were in a truck parked in a deserted alley.

"It started to go wrong from the beginning," said Bennett, who was



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Flanagan's best friend. The pair were hiking companions and were planning to go on holidays with their families once they returned to Canada.

"I was walking with Derek and we knew it was going bad so he said 'Let's take them down,' and I said 'Okay, give me the sign,'" Bennett said Thursday.

"Derek signalled to Girdlestone, and then we both jumped into the truck and everything went crazy."

"Derek's fighting with one of the bad guys and another's on his back, so I grabbed her and the truck took off and out we both went."

"The last I saw of Derek, he was fighting with the bad guys as the truck went around the corner."

Bennett lay on the floor clutching one of the sisters.

Girdlestone, seeing Flanagan in the truck wrestling with two Thais, ran forward to grab hold of the driver's side of the truck and force the wheel out of his hands.

"But I forgot that in Thailand they drive on the wrong side of the road," said Girdlestone. "I ended up going for the passenger side."

Girdlestone was knocked flat as

the truck sped past, but he got up and lunged at Olivier, who had been stranded in the alley and was running away.

Olivier tried to fight his way clear, but Girdlestone subdued him and a Thai backup unit took him while Girdlestone ran down the alley.

"I heard him shout that Derek's fallen off the truck," said Bennett. "so I ran up and we found him lying on the road. We took turns giving him mouth-to-mouth."

The officer had toppled out of the truck and struck his head on a concrete sidewalk, suffering fatal spinal injuries from which he died a day later in hospital.

Flanagan's wife Fiona said she was happy with the sentences.

"My six-year-old, Christopher, went running out telling his friends today that 'the guys who killed my dad have got life'," she said.

She said she especially despised Olivier for calling her husband "a cowboy" and for "whining and snivelling when he was caught."

"He knew what he was getting into and now he's got to pay the price," she said.

Olivier is a Montreal native who lived in Vancouver before his arrest.

Mrs. Flanagan said she and Christopher had experienced nightmares in the past two weeks.

"It's strange that all this happened 18 months ago, yet it's only now we're having nightmares," she said.

"I feel especially sorry for Christopher. He's only six and he should be thinking of playing hockey or soccer with his dad, not worrying in his sleep that something will happen to me and then he'll be all alone."

Meanwhile, the affair has affected the lives and careers of the surviving team members, said Bennett.

"I'm still suffering from it. There's hardly a day goes by without me thinking of him," the officer said.

Following complaints made by Olivier to journalists that he was the victim of police entrapment and brutality, the police unit was disbanded and its actions have become the subject of an investigation by the Public Complaints Commission (PCC.)



FLANAGAN