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# Drug sting leaves RCMP smarting

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## Probe of operation criticized

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VANCOUVER — The conviction of a man who led police on a disastrous international drug sting that left one officer dead has not quelled the anger of Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers who have been accused of entrapment.

Construction worker Alain Olivier, a former resident of Vancouver and Gibsons, B.C., was convicted of trafficking in heroin this week in Bangkok. His death sentence was reduced to a minimum 30-year life imprisonment, RCMP Sergeant Peter Montague said in an interview.

The verdict was welcomed by RCMP officers who have bitterly criticized the continuing investigation by the RCMP Public Complaints Commission into the ill-fated drug bust in February, 1989.

code-named Operation Deception.

But Corporal Barry Bennett, who was involved in the operation that resulted in the death of Corporal Derek Flanagan, said in an interview that he will refuse to co-operate with the investigation.

He called it a bare-faced attempt by the federal commission to justify its existence and "so they can justify a free road trip for themselves to Thailand."

"The hell with them," Cpl. Bennett said. "I think they owe me an apology personally."

The international heroin trafficking bust went awry on a back lane in Chiang Mai when Cpl. Flanagan, struggling with a suspected heroin trafficker, fell from the back of a truck, fatally severing his spine.

An investigation by the RCMP

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# RCMP angry

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Public Complaints Commission was announced in mid-1989 after Mr. Olivier complained to a Globe and Mail reporter from his Thailand jail cell that he had been entrapped by police. Police "organized the whole trip," he said.

Richard Gosse, chairman of the federal watchdog body, said he wanted to determine what went wrong with the operation, whether it was properly authorized or whether it was arranged to make a glamorous drug bust in the infamous Golden Triangle by setting up the Canadian construction worker as a scapegoat.

Cpl. Bennett said the commission has made his life miserable with its probe, based on what he described as the flimsiest of grounds, after the death of his best friend in Thailand.

"People have had the doubt sown in their minds as to whether anything else happened over there."

On another point, Cpl. Bennett said the credibility of the RCMP drug investigators is not tarnished by a recent B.C. Supreme Court ruling that another man was entrapped in a drug deal by a police informant who was also a key player in Operation Deception.

A marijuana trafficking conviction against Michael Wheelihan was stayed by Mr. Justice Stuart Leggatt last month. He found that Mr. Wheelihan was entrapped into selling four ounces of marijuana to an undercover officer by long-time friend and undercover informant Glen Howard Barry.

There were no grounds for reasonable suspicion that Mr. Wheelihan was already engaged in trafficking, Judge Leggatt said, and Mr. Barry's involvement "violates our notions of fair play and decency."

Mr. Barry was also involved in the drug sting that led to the tragic heroin-buying trip to Thailand by Mr. Olivier and the undercover RCMP officers.

Cpl. Bennett said it is surprising that the court found Mr. Barry an unsavory witness.

"He's supposed to be with the underworld," he said. "He's not supposed to be your next-door neighbor."

"He's lining us up with the bad guys. He's the middle man."

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