

# RCMP accused of blocking inquiry

## Watchdog cites lack of co-operation with probe of anti-drug operation in Thailand

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OTTAWA — The RCMP has blocked a public investigation into an ill-fated anti-drug operation in Thailand which resulted in the death of an RCMP officer, a watchdog agency says.

Richard Gosse, chairman of the RCMP Public Complaints Commission, says he has been frustrated by a lack of co-operation from the RCMP officers who were involved in the Thailand drug operation.

"It has been a major disappointment to the chairman that this investigation has not been concluded," Mr. Gosse said in the annual report of the complaints commission, released yesterday in Ottawa.

"It remains incomplete because the members involved have, at least until recently, refused to give interviews and the force has failed to give them direction to do so."

For the past two years, Mr. Gosse has been trying to investigate the controversial drug operation, which led to the death of RCMP Corporal Derek Flanagan during a struggle with a suspected heroin trafficker in the back of a truck.

Mr. Gosse wants to know what went wrong with the drug operation, whether it was properly authorized by senior RCMP officers, and whether a Canadian construction worker was set up as the victim of an elaborate entrapment scheme.

Several RCMP officers have bitterly criticized the investigation by the public complaints commission. One officer, who vowed that he would not co-operate with the investigation, said it was a bare-faced attempt by the commission to justify its existence and gain a free trip to Thailand. "To hell with them," he said in an interview last year.

Alain Olivier, a Vancouver construction worker who was arrested in the drug investigation in 1989, asserted that the RCMP persuaded him to buy heroin in Thailand. He was convicted of heroin trafficking in Bangkok last year.

In his annual report, released yesterday, Mr. Gosse said he lacks the power to force the RCMP to co-op-

erate with his investigation. He said there is a "deficiency" in the legislation establishing his office.

Mr. Gosse said the investigation is continuing and there have been some indications recently that the RCMP officers might finally be willing to co-operate.

Elsewhere in his report, Mr. Gosse said there is "a perception that a conflict of interest exists" because his watchdog agency is financed by the same minister who is responsible for the RCMP.

The commission completed 120 reviews of complaints against the RCMP in the 1990-91 fiscal year. It was satisfied with the RCMP's disposition of 86 of those cases.