

Gangster in serious condition after prison beating; Man pleads not guilty to slashing police officer

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Gangster Jesse John Margison, whose girlfriend was gunned down by an unknown assailant in Coquitlam three years ago, was severely beaten last weekend by another prisoner at the North Fraser Pre-trial Centre.

"There was a random act of violence; we're viewing this as attempted murder," said Dean Purdy, chairman of the corrections and sheriffs services component of the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union. "Had it not been for the quick response by our staff it could have been a lot more serious."

Margison, 26, was awaiting trial on charges of kidnapping for an organized crime group, assault with a weapon and assault causing bodily harm, when he was assaulted at the Port Coquitlam prison at about 2 p.m. Sunday.

He is in hospital in serious condition. Coquitlam RCMP Cpl. Jamie Chung said it's not believed at this time that a weapon was used in the attack, but acknowledged Margison's injuries are "pretty extensive." He also said it's too early to say whether charges will be laid against the other prisoner; both the RCMP and the prison are investigating and will have to go through several cameras and recordings to determine what happened.

Purdy said such violent acts are common at the prison, which has 550 inmates stuffed into a jail built for 300. There is one officer, he said, for every 60 inmates. The assailant was a prisoner in another unit at the jail.

"This is a gang-associated member," Purdy said. "These guys will not hesitate, not for a second, to do some-thing they need to do inside a jail. Just because they're incarcerated in a maximum security jail, the gang violence doesn't end."

Margison has been in the pre-trial centre since earlier this year in connection with allegations that he, along with Troy Dax McKinnon, Van Van Vu and Derek James Stephens, participated in a violent kidnapping in Vancouver on Nov. 23 last year.

A police search, involving dogs and helicopters, drew spectators around Langara College between Main and Cambie Streets that day.

The alleged kidnapping occurred after both Margison and McKinnon were acquitted last year after waiting more than two years in prison charged with the brutal kidnapping and mutilation of former associate Robert McMillan in July 2007. McMillan's ear and finger were cut off, but when he was called as a Crown witness during the pair's trial last year, McMillan refused to testify, screamed profanities at the judge and said both men were innocent. A former associate named Jonathan McMillan, the brother of the mutilated kid-nap victim, was shot to death in December 2007.

Margison was injured in the same shooting. In February 2009, Margison's girlfriend Brianna Kinnear, 22, was gunned down in a targeted hit in Coquitlam as she drove a borrowed pickup truck on the city's Oxford Street.

Her murder is unsolved. A few days later, Margison associate Nick Smith was shot to death in a Vancouver basement suite. No one has been charged in his slaying either.