

RC MP called in after rival gang members fight in jail; UN gangsters in counselling session attacked by Bacon brothers

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Surrey pretrial jail had to call the RCMP for backup last Friday after a fight broke out between members of the Red Scorpion and United Nations gangs.

The brawl began when Red Scorpions Jamie Bacon, his brother Jarrod and associate Albert Jackman were being escorted down a corridor by a B.C. Corrections officer at about 3 p.m. on Sept. 10.

They broke away from their guard and got into a room where four or five UN gangsters, including de facto leader Barzan Tilli-Choli and his associate Karwan Saed, were attending a counselling session. The battle ensued.

Jamie Bacon is in custody awaiting trial for first-degree murder in the Surrey Six slayings of October 2007. He is also due to be sentenced next month on a number of gun convictions. His brother Jarrod remains in pretrial on a charge of conspiring to import cocaine. Jackman is facing charges of aggravated assault and murder in two separate incidents.

The UN inmates are awaiting trial on a charge of conspiring to kill the Bacon brothers.

Surrey RCMP media officer Const. Peter Neily confirmed officers were called to the jail, which is just across a parking lot from police headquarters.

"Surrey RCMP were called by Surrey pretrial staff to advise that a fight was occurring on their property. Our members attended," Neily said.

"It did involve known gang members."

He said because no one is facing charges, he cannot release the names of those involved.

"It was listed as a consensual fight," he said. "As far as we are concerned here, the police involvement has concluded."

Generally speaking, Neily said a fight is considered consensual when those involved willingly participate and no one is injured.

"If you have two guys arguing back and forth and they get into a fight, then that is a consensual fight. They both want to fight," he said.

Neily said jail staff call police for backup several times a year when the need arises, but usually deal with matters internally.

"I think they are doing their own investigation over there," he said.

B.C. Corrections official Marnie Mayhew confirmed there was an "incident" at the jail Friday.

She said every such incident involving inmates "is fully reviewed and we don't comment on active internal investigations."

She refused to comment on whether the fight was captured on surveillance video.

"Staff and prisoner safety is a priority within our provincial correctional centres. Every decision we make regarding conditions of confinement for inmates is made with safety considerations in mind," Mayhew said.

Jamie Bacon had been held in solitary confinement in the jail, but launched a constitutional challenge a year ago, calling the conditions in which he was being held inhumane. He won the case last June, but the government is appealing.

During the court challenge, the B.C. government argued that it was important for the safety of Bacon and other gang-linked inmates that Bacon remain isolated.

And B.C. Corrections lawyer Bryant Mackey said jail staff "have the potential to be caught in the middle of these altercations."

Dean Purdy, the B.C. Government and Services Employees' Union representative for jails, said Thursday that Surrey pre-trial workers are concerned about the fight and the potential for more violence.

"Because it is under investigation, I am not able to talk about the specifics," he said. "We are dealing with more violence in the jails, especially in the Lower Mainland."

He said B.C. jails are at more than double their capacity and with increasing numbers of rival gangsters imprisoned, the situation is volatile.

At normal capacity, there are about 18 inmates per staff member, Purdy said.

"Now the ratio is as high as one to 40."

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