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MOUNTAIN INSTITUTION

## Second B.C. inmate dies after weekend riot

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VANCOUVER -- A second inmate from Mountain Institution, a federal penitentiary east of Vancouver, has died after a weekend riot in which about 60 prisoners armed with baseball bats, clubs and fire hoses from the gym forced their way into several of the institution's buildings.

The situation quickly spiraled out of control, a union official said, when the 22 prison staff on duty were forced to flee to the roof of the building around 9:45 p.m. Saturday. Michael Andrew Gibbon, a borderline mentally retarded man who was serving an indefinite sentence for sexually assaulting young girls, was attacked and killed during that time. The Integrated Homicide Investigation Team is probing his death.

Meanwhile, several prisoners also broke into the on-site health centre and got hold of several drugs, said Gord Robertson, Pacific regional president of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers.

A total of 12 inmates were taken to hospital for overdosing, he said, while one was transported with non-life-threatening injuries after being assaulted.

One of those inmates, whose identity had not been released as of last night, died in hospital Sunday evening from a drug overdose, Correctional Service Canada spokesman Dave Lefebvre confirmed in an interview yesterday.

Mr. Lefebvre would not say whether the health centre was one of the buildings to which inmates were able to gain access, or that drugs were stolen, but stated that Corrections Canada is conducting an investigation to "determine every aspect of this disturbance."

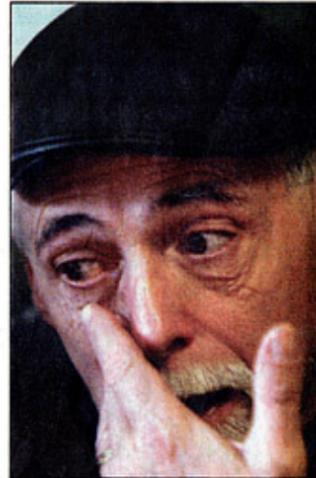
Mr. Robertson said UCCO has made it clear to Corrections Canada on several occasions that open-concept, medium security facilities like Mountain Institution, where inmates are allowed to move freely within the walls, make it easy for them to gain control.

Mountain has been forced into extended lockdown-mode three times in recent months because of assaults and rioting.

Although it is still unclear what triggered Saturday's incident, it is by far the most extreme to date, he said.

"They went into different buildings, different units, breaking into cells. They smashed computers, they smashed appliances, there was flooding because they pulled the fire hoses out, smashing the control posts," Mr. Robertson said. "The staff had to flee because the inmates were armed and the staff aren't."

Mr. Robertson said barriers need to be installed so that staff have the chance to lock down certain parts of the prison if there is a security breach. Movement restrictions, like one enforced last week that forced inmates to be confined to their cells after every meal, aren't enough, he said.



GLENN FLETT

Glen Flett, a former Mountain Institution prisoner who runs an outreach program called L.I.N.C. (Long-term Inmates Now in the Community), said it is these tighter restrictions, like the lockdowns after meals and the new smoking ban that will go into effect at the end of the month, that are agitating inmates.

"The pressure's mounting," he said.

Further, he said, the death of Mr. Gibbon, whom he'd known since 1998, resulted from more than Saturday night's chaos. He believes Mr. Gibbon, who he said had the mental capacity of a 12-year-old, was targeted because he was a convicted child sex-offender. He said he had been threatened before.

"For one thing, it's double-bunk at Mountain and the bottom line is very few people wanted to live with him because of his status. And people who lived with him were often threatened or encouraged to beat him up or to treat him badly."

Mr. Flett said Mr. Gibbon was killed in his unit, about 200 metres away from the gym where the riot began.

Mr. Lefebvre would not confirm where Mr. Gibbon's body was found, but did say that Mountain is a mixed-population institution.

"We have sex offenders living in the same living unit as people who have committed murder, living in the same unit as people who have committed property offences."

Mr. Gibbon's lawyer, Martin Peters, said in an interview that his client, with whom he had been in frequent contact, should have been segregated from the general population.

"It's hard for me to say he wouldn't have had more protection if he was segregated because that's the very purpose of that exercise," Mr. Peters said.