

RCMP investigated over handling of elderly couple caught on video

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Detectives from an outside police force have begun an independent investigation after the release of a video of an elderly couple apparently being manhandled and pulled down a flight of stairs by Coquitlam RCMP officers.

Major crime detectives from the New Westminster Police Department made contact with the family of the elderly couple on Saturday, Acting Sergeant Jeff Scott said Sunday. The team included one Korean-speaking officer, as the couple is of Korean descent, though it turns out the couple does speak fluent English.

Coquitlam RCMP was called to the Best Western hotel in Coquitlam late Thursday night after a strata meeting “had gotten out of hand and some parties were potentially fighting,” according to New Westminister Police.

A video circulating online shows one officer forcefully dragging a fallen, elderly man down a flight of stairs – first by his arm, then also his leg – while another officer struggles to handcuff his wife, who appears to resist and ends up seated on the stairs.

“You’re going to kill her, man!” someone is heard shouting.

“I’m not killing her, okay?” the officer replies.

All the while, a young girl, identified in media reports as the couple's granddaughter, screams hysterically and hits one of the officers.

It's not yet known how long the investigation will take.

"It will depend on how many witnesses we need to speak with, how much video surveillance there may be," Sgt. Scott said.

"To go through all the surveillance, slowly and meticulously, will take some time. Ideally it's not something that's drawn out, but we want to do it methodically and treat everybody fairly and objectively."

As of Sunday, no charges have been laid. No one at Coquitlam RCMP has been put on administrative leave, according to both Sgt. Scott and Coquitlam RCMP Staff-Sergeant Rachael Meredith.

Meanwhile, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission has launched its own investigation into how Mounties handled the incident.

Senior director Richard Evans said the independent review board will look into whether RCMP used good policing practices, but cannot recommend criminal or code of conduct charges.

The family has not filed an official complaint against the Mounties at this point, Sgt. Scott said.

Superintendent Sean Maloney, officer in charge of Coquitlam RCMP, said he understands the video may cause concern to the public.

"I want to acknowledge up front that the Coquitlam RCMP relies on the trust and co-operation of our community," Supt. Maloney said in a statement. "Policing is and must be a partnership with the community. I ask for the community's understanding to give time for a fulsome review to take place, so I can make an informed decision about the next steps."

In an interview with the CBC, Myung Ju Lee described how he and his wife, Kap Su Lee, were treated by police.

"He grabbed my arm, twisted it, put it behind my back, then kicked me [down the stairs] from the second floor," he said.

The couple told the CBC they spent the night in the hospital, having received bruises and scrapes as a result of the incident.

With reports from The Canadian Press

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