

Canada Terrorist Attacks: Sting Operation or Entrapment

CTV Transcript of Comments by Opposition MPs

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ANCHORS: CRAIG OLIVER AND JANE TABER

GUESTS: DEREK LEE, LIBERAL PUBLIC SAFETY CRITIC; JOE COMARTIN, NDP PUBLIC SAFETY CRITIC

BODY:

CRAIG OLIVER: We are joined now in Toronto by Liberal Derek Lee, considered one of the parliamentary experts on the whole business of intelligence and defence. He's a member of the National Defence committee and others; and by Joe Comartin of the NDP, who is also the critic for public safety and himself a member of a number of committees of the commons including defence committee. Let me start with you, Mr. Lee. What does this sound like to you? Is this serious stuff in your estimation?

DEREK LEE (Liberal Public Safety Critic): Well, the round up at first showed me that the police agencies, security agencies, the new investments in infrastructure for them, the new laws were coming together, and they seemed to have a fairly good looking operation. But what I'm hearing now in the media, because I have heard nothing directly, is that there was a sting involved, and that causes me to want to wait a little bit just to find out some more of the facts. If there in fact was a sting and if we have underaged persons involved, I want to hear more before I can come to the conclusion that this was as lethal and risky as the first media reports made it out to be.

OLIVER: Mr. Comartin, I guess the word we're looking for here is entrapment.

JOE COMARTIN (NDP Public Safety Critic): Certainly with what has come out late yesterday afternoon and overnight, there's got to be some concern in particular with the number of youth that are involved in this, or at least alleged to be involved in this. I think, Craig, what we're looking at is it seems to have been a very sophisticated approach by our intelligence services and police services. I think Derek and I both appreciate that, because we've been critical of the silo effect where agencies haven't cooperated. On the other hand, you have to look at what we know up to this point, and begin to wonder is this a very unsophisticated copycat type of attempt with a number of inept people? That's beginning to be what it looks

like.

OLIVER: Mr. Lee, many people now believe there will be a debate started over Afghanistan. The idea being that Muslims in Canada, and particularly Arab Canadians, may be deeply offended by what they see as a war on fellow Muslims, and Canada participating in that war on behalf of George Bush. What do you think of that concept?

LEE: This should be a big issue for us. There are thousands and thousands, in fact 99.9 percent of the broader Islamic community is out there very sensitive about this and waiting to hear some reassurance that they're Canadians just like everybody else. And a few bad apples, should there be some, inspired by what's happening abroad, shouldn't be allowed to taint the whole community. So I'm happy to engage in a debate like that, and I know the Islamic community, the broader community, will come forward. They're Canadians just like me and you, and we'll deal with these issues straight up. And I know that community, if you can silo it, is participating with the authorities and the intelligence services. They're as concerned about our Canadian safety as anyone else, and I'm very proud of what they've contributed so far, and they'll be engaged in a debate like that should it evolve indication

OLIVER: Can I hear you on that, Mr. Comartin?

COMARTIN: Well I want to echo the part about the engagement of the Muslim community across this country. They're the major victims when something like this happens because of the, what seems to be inevitable backlash. Canada has been very good, I think, overall about the limited nature of that backlash, but it certainly is there. There's the bigotry and the racism that comes to the surface at these points. With regards to Afghanistan specifically, I don't think it's just that. It will be Palestine, it'll be the war in Iraq, are we engaged in a war of two civilizations, which I don't believe we are. But the community here, the Muslim community here, has every right to expect that Canadians will respond with moderation, apply our values, apply our judicial and justice system to the facts that are here. We don't overreact and we don't panic. That's what we're expecting. In terms of the debate, threats like this, if in fact it's real, are ones that we have to cope with without sacrificing our values.

OLIVER: Now this is going to be something of a national security trial. Will it worry either of you if some of the trial might be held in camera? I mean none of us have any idea yet whether they may be trying to protect secrets. In other words that the trial may not be transparent enough. Will that be a worry to you?

LEE: It will be judicial, I mean it will be judicially supervised. It will be a judicial procedure. So to that extent I'm reassured. There may be components of it that won't have scrutiny. But as we speak, I think the House is about to reconsider Bill C 81 which would allow a parliamentary, a new parliamentary, a special parliamentary committee to look inside the envelope of these things and scrutinize it a lot more closely than we've been able to do up to now.

COMARTIN: I think, Craig, up to this point from what we can see of the charges that have been laid, there's been no indication that they're going to invoke that part of the anti-terrorism legislation to conduct any part of these proceedings in camera.

OLIVER: Derek Lee, Joe Comartin, thank you, both of you, for giving us your time this Sunday

afternoon.

LEE: You're welcome.

COMARTIN: You're welcome.

OLIVER: Still ahead, homeland insecurity.

bold: emphasis added

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