

One Year After Canada's October 22nd Shootings: We Need a Public Inquiry

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On the evening of October 22, 2014 I found myself in Toronto sitting alone in a restaurant watching a CNN news broadcast playing on a huge TV in the restaurant's main room. The Ottawa shootings of the day were front and centre.

When the young waitress brought my bowl of chili I said to her,

“So we’re being attacked by terrorists now?”

“So they say,” she replied evenly.

“You know,” I said, “I have my doubts about this whole thing.”

“Of course,” she replied. “This is obviously meant to support Harper’s military intervention in the Middle East.”

My jaw dropped. Maybe my fellow Canadians were more inclined to skepticism than I thought?

The “war on terrorism” has been a tangle of deceptions, so there were plenty of reasons to greet this latest act of apparent terrorism with suspicion. For my part, I had just finished writing a book about the 2001 anthrax attacks in the US, so I was in a mood for questioning. The anthrax attacks had appeared to be a jihadi attack (“DEATH TO AMERICA...ALLAH IS GREAT,” said the letters) and they were used to justify invasions of other countries and the theft of civil rights in the US. But shortly after the Patriot Act was signed into law in October of 2001 by George W. Bush the jihadi story had collapsed. The anthrax spores in the deadly letters, including the letters to two key Democratic senators holding up passage of the Patriot Act, were revealed to have originated neither in an al-Qaeda lab nor an Iraqi lab, but in a US lab serving the military and intelligence communities. [1]

Here was a theme I would not forget: the very security and intelligence agencies that gain power from a bill intimidate the people’s elected representatives into passing the bill.

Such thoughts were in my mind as I sat in the restaurant in Toronto watching the events on Parliament Hill. Centre Block was, in those moments, still in lockdown. Canadian Members of Parliament, having been exposed to a barrage of gunfire right outside their caucus doors, were trapped, and definitely intimidated, while officers with guns went through the houses of Parliament.

Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette has recalled her experience in her Senate office:

At 2:30 p.m., to cries of “Police,” my assistant opens the office’s main door. He comes face to face with soldiers aiming their machine guns at him and ordering him to put his hands in the air. One by one, our doors are opened and the soldiers point their guns at my other assistants who exit their offices, hands in the air, as if they were criminals... The door we go through is destroyed; glass has exploded all over the floor. The door across the hallway has also been knocked in. Glass litters the hallway. There are more than 50 people crammed into four offices, everyone talking to one another...

I sit near the open window. I’m breathing but stunned: parliamentarians are under the command of the military. Parliament is in the hands of the armed forces. [2]

The people with guns who took control of Parliament were likely militarized police rather than the armed forces per se, but it was not easy to tell them apart. Police of different types swarmed the vicinity, some of them carrying heavy automatic weapons and dressed in helmets, boots and green fatigues.

I wondered on October 22, 2014 if we were witnessing a revised version of the 2001 US fraud—another intimidation of an elected legislature by internal security forces to facilitate a shift in power. Bill C-13, allowing increased surveillance of Canadian citizens, was before Parliament and C-44, further empowering Canada’s spy agency, CSIS, was to be introduced that very day, October 22. Soon we would learn that another bill was on the way. It turned out to be the infamous Bill C-51, now made law as the “Anti-terrorism Act, 2015,” one of Canada’s most repressive and dangerous pieces of legislation.

On October 23, 2014, Kevin Vickers, the sergeant-at-arms responsible for killing the Parliament shooter, got a standing ovation in Parliament. Unity in the legislature as all parties joined in celebrating their safety! Soon citizens were treated to images of the Prime Minister hugging the leaders of the opposing parties. More unity! But the hugs were familiar from the fall of 2001. The image of Democratic senate majority leader Tom Daschle embracing George W. Bush in the wake of the 9/11 attacks was fresh in my mind. This particular unity had enabled the passing of a bill permitting the use of armed force overseas, *Authorization for Use of Military Force, 2001*. The subsequent anthrax attacks had kept this unity intact long enough to enable the passing of the Patriot Act. [3]

There was another troubling development. Those parliamentarians who did not bow and scrape before the Prime Minister, and who resisted the use of the October 22 attacks to pass repressive legislation, tended to adopt a “lone nut” narrative. According to this story the suspect, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, was simply an unbalanced homeless man acting on his own—a case for social services rather than a sign of coordinated political violence. The problem was that this narrative did not accommodate all the available evidence.

There was evidence that Zehaf-Bibeau had planned his attack carefully and had had access to considerable resources; there was evidence that the October 22 attack was linked to an earlier October 20 attack in the province of Quebec; and there was a good deal of evidence that police knew well in advance that attacks such as those that took place that week were in the works. The story of the drug-addled loner seemed inadequate. Accordingly, I wrote a letter to a local Member of Parliament warning him not to invest all his credibility in this lone nut narrative. I suggested that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police would, at an opportune moment, display the video shot by the suspect just before his killing of a soldier at the War Memorial. The video would show Zehaf-Bibeau to have been cogent and as well as

committed to some form of jihadi enterprise.

That, of course, is what happened. After keeping the video from the public for months RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson decided, during the hearings held in association with Bill C-51, that it was time for Canadians to see it. In fact, now we not only *could* see it, we really *should* see it. He asked that his showing of the video be televised live in Canada. Sure enough, the Zehaf-Bibeau we saw in that video did not look like an unbalanced homeless man. Clean, well groomed and rational, he appeared to know just what he was doing.

So, if he was not a lone nut, who and what was he? Was he acting with, or on behalf of, others? If so, what others? I did not know at the time, and I still do not know, the answers to these questions. But I do know that the usual two hypotheses—the lone nut and the member of an Islamic terrorist organization—do not exhaust the possibilities, and that a third possibility is being kept from the Canadian public. I also know that the police narrative is tattered, trailing a host of unanswered questions, and kept in place with the help of RCMP secrecy and deception.

As for the third hypothesis, the unspeakable hypothesis, it is merely necessary to recall that *the majority of people who come before the courts in North America on charges related to violent terrorism have been aided and abetted by police and intelligence agencies.*

This known fact was seldom part of the discourse in the heated discussions on television in the weeks and months after October 22, 2014. Police pretended to be unaware of the pattern. For example, in a CBC Radio interview on March 7, 2015, RCMP Commissioner Paulson stated that when he had first watched Zehaf-Bibeau's jihad video, he had found it shocking. The clarity, the sense of purpose of this violent man! Mr. Paulson neglected to tell listeners that in the previous year the RCMP had taken a young man similar in many ways to Zehaf-Bibeau—impoverished, adrift in Vancouver, caught between drug addiction and his personal version of Islam—and had done their best over a period of months to turn him into a terrorist. RCMP moles *had prompted this man, John Nuttall, and his common law wife to make videos taking responsibility for "violence in the name of Allah."* The moles had assisted in the jihadi video productions and "even provided the black Islamic flag the two used as a backdrop for a video message urging jihad."

Were we really supposed to believe, then, that Mr. Paulson was shocked by Zehaf-Bibeau's video? And, given the well established broad pattern of entrapment by police and intelligence agencies in North America, would it not be perverse for any thoughtful person to neglect the possibility that state agencies may have been complicit in the October 22 shootings? Yet avoidance of this possibility has been the rule in this year since the 2014 events, on the part of both the media and Members of Parliament.

We appear to be in the presence of yet another taboo in the Global War on Reason.

Determined that civil society researchers not allow themselves to be silenced by this taboo and determined as well not to allow information available in the early hours and days of this event to be swept down the memory hole, I decided to write a report on the October 22 shootings. My central aim was to see whether the questions many of us had in the wake of the events had been answered. My 25,000-word report, submitted to Canadian NGO, Democracy Probe International, is now available here:

<http://democracyprobe.ca/2015/10/report-on-oct-22-2014-attacks-received-by-dpi/>

The list of important, unanswered questions is a long one. For this reason I am calling for a federal public inquiry.

Why is a public inquiry necessary? First of all, police killed the suspect, putting 31 bullets in his body. There is no sign of further suspects and, therefore, no court case on the horizon. No court case usually means no serious effort to discover the truth. Secondly, several months ago a series of police reports was released but they added little to what we already knew. Redaction in these reports is heavy, methodology is poor, and the most serious questions have not even been asked. Thirdly, the media have not done their job. There were fierce promises on the day of October 22, 2014 that they would pursue the key questions, but for the most part these promises have been broken.

I hope readers who are disgusted when they see foreign military intervention defended, and repressive legislation passed, on the basis of obscure events shrouded in police secrecy will download this report, study it, build on it, and use it.

*Graeme MacQueen was the founding director of the Centre for Peace Studies at McMaster University and has been involved in peace-building projects in several war zones. His book *The 2001 Anthrax Deception* was published by Clarity Press in 2014.*

Notes

With the exception of the few cases below, sources are given in the report referred to in the article: *The October 22, 2014, Ottawa Shootings: Why Canadians Need a Public Inquiry*.

[1] Céline Hervieux-Payette, October 22, 2014. The Day the Military Police Took Control of Parliament. Blog of Senator Hervieux-Payette.

<http://eurekablog.ca/en/articles/politics/national/october-22-2014-day-military-police-took-control-parliament/>

I am grateful to Amy MacPherson for pointing me to this blog.

[2] Graeme MacQueen, *The 2001 Anthrax Deception: The Case for a Domestic Conspiracy*. Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2014. See especially Chapter 5.

[3] Ibid. See especially Chapter 3.

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