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Statement from the Nova Scotia RCMP to provide context to recently unsealed information

July 30, 2020

Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

News release

The release of previously redacted or sealed information contained in Operation H-Strong Informations to Obtain, (ITOs) has resulted in a number of questions. Some of the unsealed and released Information is being interpreted as corroborated facts without full context, which is resulting in confusion and speculation. We wish to clarify that information with context and facts.

The RCMP stands by its public comments that have been made based on corroborated facts and evidence and is committed to continue sharing information first with the families as has been our priority throughout the investigation.

To understand what the released information means and its implications it is important to first explain the purpose of an ITO and the requirements or obligations on the part of police when making a legal application before a Judge or a Justice.

Informations to Obtain:

In many cases, police require judicial authorizations in order to access information or to search for and seize things believed to be related to an offence. Legal applications are made before a Justice, usually in the form of an ITO or an affidavit. Legal applications are sworn by a writer, known as an affiant, who has access to all materials associated to a particular investigation.

In applying for a basic search warrant or a production order for information or evidence, the affiant needs to articulate, (via reasonable grounds or information) to the reviewing Justice that an offence has been committed and that the things being sought or searched for will afford evidence related to the offence under investigation. The affiant is obligated to disclose all relevant information with enough detail that it would be considered by the courts as being done in a "full, frank and fair" manner.

Recently released information that was previously redacted:

Some of the information that was unsealed and released from the ITOs on July 27, 2020, is from one individual who was interviewed and provided information which described the gunman as someone who was involved in the importation and trafficking of illicit drugs and firearms.

As Part of H-Strong, investigators have conducted close to 700 witness interviews and only this one witness has come forward with information that the gunman was actively and recently involved in the importation and trafficking of illegal drugs. No other persons interviewed of the close to 700, including those closest to the gunman, have provided similar information that proves the gunman was an illegal drug smuggler and or drug trafficker. Therefore we cannot corroborate this information.

Since the investigation began, the RCMP has been guided based on a full assessment and understanding of the totality of corroborated information and evidence, so that we can validate and verify it. This has guided the RCMP with respect to the content and detail of information that we have provided to victims' families, survivors and the public. In an investigation, not every piece of information that police receive is determined to a corroborated fact or becomes evidence. Because of this we do not speak about everything we have been told during the close to 700 interviews or other aspects of the investigation. Instead, we investigate and conduct a full assessment in order to achieve the most complete understanding of the totality of corroborated information. Again, the RCMP stands by its public comments.

As we have repeatedly stated, our investigation is ongoing and the investigative team remains open to all possibilities. The course of any investigation may change based on new information or evidence that is brought forward to police or that is determined as part of the investigation. We encourage anyone with information to please come forward.

To this point, July 30, 2020, RCMP investigators believe the following information with respect to the gunman:

Information/evidence that supports the gunman's involvement in any other murders prior to April 18, 2020:

- The one same witness is the only witness who described the gunman as having been involved in other murders and the disposal of bodies prior to April 18, 2020. The RCMP has not received any credible or actionable information that the gunman was involved in any other murders outside the murders committed by him on April 18 and 19, 2020. This belief is based on:

- o Investigators have confirmed that prior to becoming a certified denturist, the gunman worked as a licenced embalmer at a funeral service provider. In terms of any involvement that the gunman had in previous murders or of unlawful body disposal, the RCMP has not uncovered any additional information or evidence to support this claim.

- o Forensic Identification Specialists have conducted a thorough examination of the gunman's residence and surrounding properties. This examination included the sifting of surface debris as well as sub-surface excavation and sub-surface examinations using ground penetrating radar equipment. The searches and forensic examinations did not uncover any evidence to support the theory that the gunman had committed previous murders or the disposal of human remains on his property.

Information/evidence that supports organized criminal activity or involvement by the gunman in an organized crime group:

- Witnesses have described that while attending university in New Brunswick in the mid to late 1980s, the gunman was involved in the smuggling and illegal sale of cigarettes and liquor as a means to make money during that period of his life. There has been no further information to suggest that the gunman remained involved in the smuggling or illegal sale of cigarettes or liquor after that time or in the recent past.

- The gunman was involved in procuring firearms illegally. In terms of the firearms, at this time we can confirm that this took place predominantly in the United States and that one firearm had been illegally obtained in Canada. Any transactions of firearms on the part of the gunman or anyone else remains part of the active investigation. As such, no further details in relation to this can or will be provided at this time.

- The investigation has not uncovered any evidence that the gunman was involved in organized crime. Outside of one uncorroborated statement, the remainder of witness interviews have not revealed any corroborated or actionable information that the gunman was involved in organized importation or sale of illegal drugs with any other single person or that the gunman was part of any type of criminal organization or organized crime group.

- Organized crime or a criminal organization is defined under section 467.1(1) of the Criminal Code which states that a criminal organization consists of a group, however organized that, a) is composed of three or more persons in or outside Canada; and, b) has as one of its main purposes or main activities the facilitation or commission of one or more serious offences, that, if committed, would likely result in the direct or indirect receipt of a material benefit, including a financial benefit, by the group or by any one of the persons who constitute the group.

- With the exception of the previously disclosed Criminal Intelligence Service Nova Scotia (CISNS) bulletin from 2011, a search for any other intelligence bulletins naming the gunman has not resulted in any information or bulletins within the RCMP's holdings.

Information/evidence that supports the source of funds available and accessed by the gunman prior to April 18, 2020:

- Production Order records obtained for the gunman's email communications details the reason and source of withdrawal of personal funds from the gunman's personal investments and bank accounts. These email communications from the gunman to financial institutions and others detail his intent to liquidate personal assets and convert those into cash. The purpose of those conversions and withdrawals was based on the gunman's belief that his assets were safer in his possession as it related to the current pandemic. A significant amount of currency has been recovered from the gunman's burned out property in Portapique which supports the pre April 18 withdrawal of funds previously disclosed. A forensic audit of the gunman's accounts remains underway and no further details can be disclosed until this task has been completed.

Information/evidence that supports an association between the gunman and individuals from the State of Maine:

- The gunman was associated to US citizens who currently reside in the state of Maine. The nature of those relationships appear to be based on friendship and mutual interests. Investigators have confirmed that the gunman did communicate with these individuals frequently and visited them on a frequent basis. The full nature and extent of those relationships remain under investigation and as such, no additional information will be provided at this time.

Information/evidence that supports information that the gunman had hidden rooms or compartments in his residence in Portapique and Dartmouth:

- Witnesses described hiding areas constructed at both the gunman's Portapique and Dartmouth residences. The Portapique residence was destroyed by fire so investigators did not have the opportunity to examine and confirm the existence of those spaces.

- Investigators have confirmed that the gunman had constructed areas in his Dartmouth residence which appear to be designed to hide items. Information also suggested that the purpose for constructing these spaces was designed to hide firearms. Given that, investigators have no reason to doubt the existence of hiding spaces constructed at both the Dartmouth and Portapique residences and believe that the purpose of constructing these spaces was for hiding illegal firearms.

The RCMP and members of the H-Strong investigative team are committed to completing a thorough and objective investigation that will continue to be based on corroborated facts, not assumptions or speculation.

Again, it is important to ensure that the families who lost loved ones as well as the survivors receive timely updates based facts known by those directly involved in the investigation, not assumptions made by any other individual who does not have all of the information available to them.

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