



# Security firms want more information from Toronto McDonald's shooting

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A private security guard will not face charges after fatally shooting two men at a Danforth Avenue McDonald's in February. But Ontario security companies say the incident could teach them how to prevent similar tragedies – if they knew more about what happened.

Toronto Police Services rebuffed calls this week to release further details about the Feb. 28 shooting or the legal reasons for the decision not to lay charges, which they announced on Wednesday. Crown attorneys concluded there was no reasonable prospect of conviction in the case, police said.

The shooting was very unusual, but within the world of private armed guards doing tasks like cash transfers, it is a reminder of daily conundrums. In the booming field of private security, armed guards are still a tiny minority, and their training and protocols are unlike those of police or unarmed private security guards.

“I would wish that eventually all the details involving the situation would be released ... simply because this is the best way for us to learn and to try to improve,” said Gary Kleiman, CEO of ValGuard Security Inc. “Maybe there are videos; I would expect to get those videos. Any details that might help us improve training and avoid similar situations in the future, anything of that sort would be tremendously helpful.”

Shortly after the shooting, police said that Donny Ouimette, 25, and Ryan Hind, 39, died after getting into a “significant physical altercation” with the armed guard, who was apparently in the restaurant to buy food and had the gun he was licensed to carry for work. Det.-Sgt. Terry Browne said 15 to 20 people were inside when “multiple shots” were fired before 3 a.m.

The guard was an employee of Intercon Security, which is owned by GardaWorld. Police have not said what task he was doing that night or for whom.

On Thursday, Police Chief Mark Saunders said a coroner's inquest might be the right “forum” to air evidence in the case. Ontario's Chief Coroner's office said on Friday it is considering holding an inquest.

“That is where any issues concerning training for security guards should be dealt with,” Toronto

Police Services spokesman Mark Pugash said. “[A coroner’s inquest] is a mechanism set up by law to examine the relevant issues, consider evidence, and make appropriate recommendations.”

The lessons from that night could affect companies’ policies on employee breaks or training on use of force. What most people do not understand, security experts said, is that private armed guards see self-defence differently than an average, unarmed person, and differently than police, who are not tasked with protecting valuables.

Private armed guards receive 40 hours of firearm training. They are told not to interact with the public, and to shoot when they perceive a real threat, Mr. Kleiman said. That can include someone touching their guns intentionally, because losing a gun is a “threat of the highest level” that would put them at the mercy of assailants, he said, adding that this may have happened in the McDonald’s.

“As I understood, what happened is those guys stood behind the guard in line and touched his gun, maybe as a joke,” he said. “Whether or not there was a threat or whether the guard only thought there was a threat is a very fine line there.”

ValGuard employees are encouraged to pack meals and remain in their armored trucks, he said. If they need to step outside, disarming and re-arming is considered more dangerous than keeping the gun because of the risk of accidental discharge, he said.

Nick Jabbour, general manager of HM Cash, said his employees stay armed on food or washroom breaks as long as they are on route. Criminals may be watching their work patterns, and being seen routinely unarmed makes them vulnerable, he said. But he is not sure what policies the InterCon employee was following or if they could be improved.

“The armed guard in question, was this something they did on a regular basis or a one-off?” Mr. Jabbour said. “Was it one person who went in on their own, unguarded, was it more than one? There’s a lot of questions that need to be asked.”

GardaWorld spokesman Joe Gavaghan said he did not know whether the company made policy changes after the McDonald’s shooting. He said he would leave decisions about releasing evidence to the police.

Canadian courts see private guards as regular citizens when it comes to self-defence, although they are armed, said George Rigakos, a policing expert at Carleton University. Very little research has been done on guards’ use of force, but it is much more common for them to be victims, Dr. Rigakos said. He said the companies and their insurers study lethal incidents carefully.

“The private security industry is extremely risk-averse,” he said.

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