

June 14, 2017

IIU concludes investigation into injuries during arrest on Sagkeeng First Nation

On May 18, 2017 the Independent Investigation Unit of Manitoba (IIU) concluded its investigation into an incident in which a man sustained a serious injury during arrest, and has determined there are no grounds for charges against the subject officer.

In the early morning hours of February 4, 2017, officers executed a search warrant for drugs and firearms at a residence on Sagkeeng First Nation. The suspect ran towards a bedroom closet and the subject officer, fearing the man was about to arm himself, fired one round from his beanbag shotgun, a “less lethal” firearm. The beanbag round struck the man in the abdomen and caused him to leap onto a bed, near which there was a medieval-type battle axe and a large knife.

As a result, the male sustained bruising to the abdomen and a serious cut to his right hand. He was taken to Pine Falls Hospital where he received 20 stitches to his hand, and where x-rays showed an object embedded in the ring finger. The man later had his finger amputated at the Health Sciences Centre.

The IIU investigation showed a tip was missing from one of the blades on the medieval battle axe seized from the bedroom and most likely caused the laceration to the hand. It found the man’s injury was unrelated to being struck by the single beanbag round.

This investigation considered whether the decision of the subject officer to fire upon the man was justified. IIU Civilian Director Zane Tessler noted officers were aware some residents of the home had a history of violence, gang affiliations and illicit drug use, and there was a strong likelihood that weapons may be present. When the man ran towards a closet and did not obey the officer’s order to stop, the officer’s fear that the man might arm himself “was genuine and reasonable under the circumstances.”

The man remains before the Court on charges arising out of this incident. The civilian director’s complete report will be posted online once the charges are dealt with.

The details of this investigation were first reported on February 6, 2017.

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