

PARLIAMENT HILL ATTACK



NINA GREWAL

Conservative MP Nina Grewal's photo captures the tense scene inside a meeting room, where members of Parliament barricaded the doors to prevent the gunman from entering.

Politicians, staffers gripped by terror

Chaos ensued as sound of gunfire sent security and MPs scrambling

JOANNA SMITH
OTTAWA BUREAU

OTTAWA—It was caucus day on Parliament Hill, when politicians and their staffers meet behind closed doors and journalists hang around outside them.

Justice Minister Peter MacKay had just made a bit of news on his way into the Conservative party caucus meeting, telling reporters government officials were reviewing police powers to monitor terrorism suspects in light of the attack on a Canadian soldier in Quebec earlier this week.

As things wound down, Greta Levy, a press secretary for the NDP, headed out the front doors below the Peace Tower with a colleague and had just reached the top of the main staircase when they saw someone in uniform yell at them to get down, that there was a gun.

She raised her head and saw the gunman.

"This man (was) walking, not running," said Levy, who saw his face.

"As soon as I saw the rifle, I put my head back down," she said.

Moments later, she heard the muffled sound of gunshots from inside Centre Block, followed by silence and then a second round of shots, while a woman who had dropped to the ground with her started crying.

"When that round ended, there was a police officer who came running up the middle steps with his gun drawn and said, 'Where did he go?'" Levy said.

NDP MPs and staffers were in the middle of their caucus meeting in the Railway Committee Room — directly across the Hall of Honour from the Reading Room where the Conservatives were meeting — when they heard the shots outside the door.

NDP MP Charlie Angus said MPs and staffers tried to barricade the door with tables and lay down on the floor. "You've never been through this before. You don't know what the

routine is other than what you have seen in the movies, so we didn't know if someone was going to be able to try and get in," he said.

"We were on the floor and then security came and they were very, very serious," Angus said by phone from his office on Sparks St., after having evacuated the building.

"They told us to run, to stay down and to stay along the walls," Angus said, describing how three of his fellow NDP MPs were worried about their children — at least two of them were in the building — and did not want to leave without them. All three children are safe.

Liberal MP Adam Vaughan said he was walking down a stairway in Centre Block around 10 a.m. when he heard gunshots, which echoed in the stairwell.

"I saw security guards scrambling everywhere, saying, 'Shots fired!'" said Vaughan, who was pushed up against a wall by a security guard for his safety and then hustled away.

Terry Guillon, executive director of the Canadian Parliamentary Press



"I saw security guards scrambling everywhere, saying, 'Shots fired!'"

LIBERAL MP ADAM VAUGHAN

Gallery, had been walking up to Parliament Hill with Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin Vickers shortly before the gunman arrived.

Vickers was the one who later shot the assailant.

Guillon said he had just entered the "hot room" — an office in Centre Block used by several members of the media — when he heard what he thought was the usual construction noise. "Then it started. It was like, 'bang, bang, bang,' one after the other," said Guillon, who locked the

doors to the office and was eventually escorted onto the roof and down scaffolding by police.

Sen. Jim Munson said he was meeting with his colleagues in the Senate Liberal open caucus in Centre Block when a security guard ran in.

"Get out. Get out. There's a gunman," Munson recalled him saying.

They were then ordered back in, as the gunman was still loose in the building.

"As we turned around to go back in, you could hear a volley of shots, a whole whack of shots. People were shaken, a lot of shattered nerves," said Munson.

His caucus colleague, Sen. David Smith, and his administrative assistant, Doreen Jones, were each locked down in their office a stone's throw away from where the shooting took place.

"There were people running down the hall," Smith said. "They'd go, 'Close your door. He might be coming.'"

With files from Peter Edwards and Les Whittington

> ANALYSIS

Even simple attacks can feed extremists

Islamic State followers gain from worldwide attention

MICHELLE SHEPHARD
NATIONAL SECURITY REPORTER

OTTAWA—How do you stop someone with a weapon and a mission?

That has been the fear among security and intelligence officials in recent weeks as the so-called Islamic State called for attacks at home.

It is the easiest form of terrorism — no need for sophisticated plots, or training, or financing — but as Wednesday's killing of Cpl. Nathan Frank Cirillo in the heart of Canada's capital showed, even simple attacks can elicit the widespread panic and attention these groups crave.

Many details about Cirillo's killing and the motives of the shooter, identified as Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, are still unknown. Was there any connection to Martin Couture-Rouleau, 25, who killed 53-year-old Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent Monday in a hit-and-run in Quebec? Did Zehaf-Bibeau have any ties abroad?

But no matter the connections, followers of the Islamic State (also known as ISIS and ISIL) benefited from the worldwide attention as they gloated on social media soon after Cirillo's death. "Canada getting a taste of their own medicine?" wrote one.

Another prolific ISIS supporter wrote: "Canada starting to pay the price of intervention."

Along with spreading panic, terrorism is intended to deliver a message, and the message seems clear: Canada's military involvement in the campaign against ISIS will be punished.

Military institutions and personnel have always also been seen as targets since Canada's involvement in the war in Afghanistan. CFB Borden, a base north of Toronto, was one of the targets of the so-called Toronto 18 terrorism plot that was thwarted in 2006.

Following the killing of a British soldier in Woolwich last year, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service issued a threat assessment focusing on vulnerabilities of Canadian forces.

"Simple, straightforward attacks using readily available weapons and minimal preparations on undefended targets are a better match with the actual capabilities of most extremists," reads the threat assessment that seemed to foreshadow the events this week. Zehaf-Bibeau killed with a rifle; Couture-Rouleau with a car.

The threat level only increased with Canada's high-profile role in fighting ISIS and the contribution of air support and small force of military advisers.



ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

CSIS head Richard Fadden, left, watches police secure an area around Parliament Hill on Wednesday.

Amarnath Amarasingam, a post-doctoral fellow at Dalhousie University's Resilience Research Centre, who has been studying Canadian ISIS recruits, says Wednesday's attack perfectly suited the group's narrative. "They're calling for Muslims to defend the Islamic State but if they can't travel, then Muslims around the world are to attack at home to support the caliphate."

And that call to attack at home was what most troubled security officials, especially when Ottawa began revoking passports of Canadians under terrorism investigations in an at-

tempt to stem the flow of Western recruits.

If ISIS supporters cannot travel, would attacks at home increase? As one security source said, "taking passports is only half the battle."

Couture-Rouleau was one of those 90 Canadian suspects who had his passport seized. Zehaf-Bibeau also had issues surrounding his passport — although it is unclear whether it was "seized" as other reports indicated.

Before the details of Couture-Rouleau's crime was known, Jeff Yaworski, deputy operations director at

CSIS, told a Senate committee Monday that there were concerns about monitoring those who had been "radicalized to the point where they wanted to leave," but prevented from going overseas.

"There's nothing more that was can do with the budget that we have except to prioritize internally as effectively as we can and I think we're doing that. Our success rate has been quite good. . . I'd be foolhardy to say we've got all the bases covered."

Follow **Michelle Shephard** on Twitter @shephardm. Contact her at mshephard@thestar.ca.