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Published By: NEWS COMMUNICATIONS since 1977

Wednesday August 20th, 2014

## FEDS WORRIED ABOUT ANOTHER 'IDLE NO MORE' AFTER N.B. FRACKING PROTEST

Federal officials closely tracked the fallout of an RCMP raid on a First Nations protest against shale-gas exploration in New Brunswick, at one point raising concerns it could spawn another countrywide movement like Idle No More.

Documents obtained under access-to-information legislation reveal a lengthy email chain last fall monitoring events related to a blockade near Rexton, N.B., about 70 kilometres north of Moncton.

Members of the Elsipogtog First Nation, who were concerned about the environmental impact of shale-gas development, didn't want energy company SWN Resources to do testing work on their traditional territory.

Police officers enforced an injunction on Oct. 17 to end the blockade of a compound where the company stored exploration equipment.

The early-morning raid led to violent clashes between officers and protesters. By the end of



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the day, six police cars had been torched and 40 people arrested.

As the situation unfolded, a government official sent an email reporting "growing support of protesters by first nation (sic) communities and other groups across the country."

"An 'Idle No More' like movement

of protests is reportedly being planned starting tomorrow," wrote Alain Paquet, director of operations for Public Safety Canada.

"We will keep you informed through our Situation Reports..."

Those in the email chain included staff within the Privy Council Office, the central bureaucracy which serves

the prime minister and cabinet.

The Government Operations Centre, an arm of Public Safety Canada, emailed out daily reports detailing planned protests across the country.

On its website, the centre says it provides an "all-hazards integrated federal emergency response to events."



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A notice emailed later on Oct. 17 gave a rundown of planned protests and whether they posed a threat of violence. "Other than the events at Rexton, N.B., so far calls are for peaceful action," the notice said.

"Most of the protest activity to date under the Idle No More banner or related environmental or First Nations issues activities have been peaceful."

The daily updates were compiled using media reports and information from the RCMP. But much of the information was derived by monitoring social media postings from the protesters themselves.

One update noted that the "creators of Idle No More in Lethbridge, AB, said via Twitter that they wasted no time in getting a group together to march down the city's main drag Thursday afternoon."

It also noted reports of "small demonstrations in New York City and Washington, D.C. outside the Canadian missions," as well as in Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Edmonton.

Another document outlined the "key messages" for the RCMP when fielding questions about its handling of the New Brunswick blockade, which protesters argued had been heavy-handed.

"Our members demonstrated incredible professionalism as they worked to resolve the situation," one bullet point in the document said.

"Some in the crowd threw rocks and bottles at them and sprayed them with bear spray. Setting police

cars on fire created a dangerous situation for all present and at that point our members were forced to physically confront some in the crowd who refused to obey the law."

By Sunday, Oct. 20, three days after the arrests, a government update said "the number of protests continues to decline."

"Less than five are planned for today according to the Idle No More website with one protest planned for Saint John, New Brunswick on Monday," the email said.

Susan Levi-Peters, one of the protesters and a former chief, said the emails reflect how Ottawa is more focused on trying to control aboriginal people rather come up with solutions.

"Canada has to have a better relationship with First Nations people," said Levi-Peters, who ran for the NDP in 2011.

"I think Ottawa is misunderstanding First Nations people. And they're getting more educated. I think Ottawa is in a shock because they don't know how to treat them anymore."

The shale-gas protests died down after Texas-based SWN Resources wrapped up its exploration work and left the province in December.

Last month, two men involved in the events of Oct. 17 were sentenced to 15 months in jail.

Germain Breau, a 21-year-old of the Elsipogtog First Nation, was found guilty of possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose and four counts of pointing a firearm.

Aaron Francis, a 20-year-old of

the Eskasoni First Nation, was convicted of possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose.

Both men were also given two years probation following their jail time.

### FRACKING PROTESTERS SUPERGLUE THEMSELVES TO ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Campaigners claim Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

is hiding findings on impacts of drilling. Anti-fracking protesters have superglued themselves to the doors at the main entrance of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). A related protest is also underway at the offices of iGas, the UK's biggest shale gas company, which has seen two entrances blockaded by campaigners.

The activists from the Reclaim the Power camp at Blackpool say the protest is against 63 redactions in a government report released last week on the potential impacts of shale gas

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exploration on rural communities. At 8am three activists superglued themselves to the doors of Defra's main entrance and tried to prevent access, the group said. Another activist climbed the building and unfurled a banner reading: "What's to hide Defra? Don't frack with our future."

Some of the activists wore black tape across their mouths, campaigners said.

A Metropolitan police spokesman said officers were called at 7.30am and there were about 15 protesters on the scene. He said they had climbed scaffolding.

The campaigners claim deleted sections in the government report include analysis around falling house prices and failing rural services.

They say the chapter examining the effect of drilling on house prices had three sections cut. But a government spokesman said: "There is no evidence that house prices have been affected in over half a century of oil and gas exploration in the UK or evidence that this would be the case with shale."

"This government believes that shale has a positive part to play in our future energy mix, providing energy security, driving growth and creating jobs."

One of the campaigners superglued to the building is Lindsay Alderton from London. Speaking from the protest, she said it is "shameful" that the government is "keeping secret the impacts of shale gas extraction", adding that the public "has a right to know".

She said: "This morning we're here at Defra to remind them that they work for the public that pays them their wages, and that the public demands to know the facts about fracking - censoring is not an acceptable option."

"At a time when we really need to be having a public debate about fracking, it's really scary that censorship of a document that needs to be out in the public realm isn't there. That's going to affect the rural communities who live there, who farm, who raise their children there, it's not okay."

Will Pettifer, who is locked to Alderton through a pipe, said: "It's a personal issue but it's an issue for everyone. There's health risks, contamination to water, continued reliance on fossil fuels, that's not great. Even though the carbon emissions from the gas itself may be lower [than coal power], the emissions from the process is far greater [though methane leaks]."

One male protester was still two floors up on the scaffolding at mid-morning.

A Defra spokeswoman said the department would not be releasing an unredacted version of the report, as the campaigners had requested.

Elsewhere in London, around a dozen protesters from Reclaim the Power also blockaded the entrance and side entrance to the Mayfair headquarters of iGas, which became the UK's biggest shale developer when it acquired rival company Dart Energy in May.

Mel Strickland, a spokeswoman for the group, told the Guardian: "We're here today targeting iGas,

the biggest company in the UK that wants to frack. We're attacking the industry on all levels today.

"Cuadrilla [another energy company] in the past has got a lot of press attention, but a lot of people don't know about iGas, so we want to focus on iGas now, to let the industry and government know that this is going to be opposed at every step of the way."

Both protests appeared to be continuing peacefully and police said no arrests had been made.

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