The Transformation of Security Planning for the Olympics: The 1976 Montreal Games

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Montreal’s Summer Olympics in 1976 was a turning point in Olympic history: it was the Games’ first highly visible security operation. It was also a transformative moment in the history of security planning in Canada: preparations for the games contributed to shifting the Security Services’ focus from communism towards domestic and international terrorism. The following article documents, for the first time, the scope of this operation. It is based on five years of requests and appeals under the federal Access to Information Act, which led to the release of over fifty thousand pages of Royal Canadian Mounted Police documents. I argue that security for the Montreal Olympics was based largely on imagined threats. In addition, I argue that security costs for the Montreal Olympics were high but modest as compared to the overall budget. Nonetheless, Montreal set a precedent for high security costs that have since become the standard for hosting the Olympics. Finally, I argue that the Montreal Olympics had long-term implications for policing in Canada. The scale of the operation produced new resources and inter-agency links that were only made possible as a result of hosting the games.

Keywords Canada, international and domestic terrorism, Olympics, policing, Quebec security

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Montreal’s Summer Olympics in 1976 is famous for many things. It was outrageously expensive, costing $1.65 billion. It took thirty years to pay the debt, despite Mayor Drapeau’s claim in 1970 that the “Olympics could no more have a deficit than a man could have a baby.” The Olympic stadium was a disaster: it was not even fully completed for the games, and its primary distinction today is raining concrete on hapless bystanders. The event saw gymnast Nadia Comaneci of Romania score a perfect 10, which remains to this day one of the great feats of modern sports. The American team fielded the best boxing team in history. Women’s events were held

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The financial figures cited in this article are based on constant dollars. They are not adjusted for inflation.

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for the first time in basketball, handball, and rowing. Canada set a record as well: it earned a meagre 11 medals, and it was the first host country not to win a gold medal. Taiwan, China, and twenty-nine African states boycotted the games. Twelve men died during the construction of the venues. And then there were the lesser-known events. The Montreal Fire Department, after hearing from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) that Ukrainian protestors planned to strip down and burn Soviet flags, drove around the city greasing flagpoles with Vaseline (one protestor was injured, and then arrested, in a failed flag-pole climbing incident).

The 1976 Summer Olympics marked a turning point in Olympic history: it was the first highly visible security operation, which has since become the norm for Olympic games.\(^3\) As Travy Taylor and Kristine Toohey have noted, the “strict security framework developed for the Montreal Olympics, which arose from an appraisal of what went wrong in Munich, provided a basic schema for all subsequent Olympic venue security operations.”\(^4\) It was also the largest peacetime security operation in Canadian history. After five years and over 300 requests under the federal Access to Information Act, the RCMP has released over fifty thousand pages of documentation in English and French on security planning for the Montreal Olympics. These documents reveal a picture of a police force with limited experience in large-scale security planning that was attempting to address a host of new threats.

The Montreal Summer games in 1976 are unique in the history of the games. In fact, it is routinely cited in studies on the Olympics, far disproportionate to the event itself. Its significance, despite the many athletic milestones reached in 1976, is as a symbol of gross mismanagement and financial failure. It also stands alongside Munich as a transformational moment in security planning. And yet most of the references to Montreal in the literature rely on the official report produced in 1976 or anecdotal accounts.\(^5\) There is a surprising dearth of serious scholarship on the Montreal Olympics and, in fact, Olympics in Canada overall despite having hosted three games. There have been two books, one published in 1976 and the other in 2009, which address the economics and politics of the Montreal games.\(^6\) These studies are largely anecdotal insider accounts. Aside from official publications, however, there have only been a handful of articles that address topics such as Aboriginal peoples, athletics, economic management, and the media.\(^7\) Otherwise, most of the scholarship on the Montreal Olympics must be cobbled together from brief references in larger studies on the history of the Olympics, and few of them are based on original research.\(^8\) This is the first historical study to focus on the Montreal Olympics.\(^9\)

The following article documents the security operation for the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal. I argue that security planning for the Olympics was based largely on imagined threats, and that they can only be understood by exploring the historical context. Fear of domestic and international terrorism surrounding national liberation movements were especially predominant in security planning. In addition, I argue that security expenses for the Montreal Olympics were high but surprisingly modest as compared to the overall budget. There is no association between security and the exorbitant cost of hosting the games in 1976.\(^10\) Nonetheless, Montreal set a precedent for rising security costs that have since become the standard for Olympic games. Finally, I argue that the Montreal Olympics had long-term implications for policing in Canada. Although it was hardly transformative, the scale of the operation produced new resources and inter-agency links that were only made possible as a result of hosting the Olympics. The Montreal Summer Olympics also represented
a profound shift in the nature of security planning. For the first time in Canadian history, fear of domestic and international terrorism overshadowed communism in security planning.

The Road to Montreal

The Montreal Olympics remains to this day the largest sporting event in Canadian history. It was also the most controversial. The games were awarded to the city in May 1970. A few months later, Canada became one of the first Western nations to recognize the People’s Republic of China. This created an untenable situation. Taiwan had been a member of the International Olympic Committee for many years, and insisted on being called the Republic of China and flying the Nationalists’ Chinese flag. China, on the other hand, adamantly refused to participate alongside Taiwan. There were intensive negotiations with Taiwan and China, but the federal government was resolute that Taiwan could not participate in the games while claiming to represent China. When the United States threatened to boycott if Taiwan was banned, the International Olympic Committee seriously considered cancelling the games. In the end, both Taiwan and China withdrew mere days before the opening ceremonies. Meanwhile, twenty-nine African countries as well as Iraq insisted on banning New Zealand from competing in Montreal. The African nations were advocating a worldwide sports boycott against South Africa to protest apartheid, which New Zealand ignored. When Canada and the International Olympic Committee refused to negotiate, most of the African states withdrew.

To make matters worse, soaring costs threatened to cancel the games. Mayor Jean Drapeau had so badly underestimated the cost that the provincial legislature hauled him before an inquiry to explain the situation. The province established an Olympic Installation Board, which took ownership and responsibility for constructing the venues. It also introduced emergency legislation in 1973 to force a settlement on striking ironworkers and to send them back to work on Olympic venues. Soon after, the media reported that the police had raided the Olympic Village construction site as part of an investigation into allegations of corruption and ties to organized crime. It was not long before people began to realize that the games were a financial disaster. The Summer Olympics in Tokyo (1964, $9 million), Mexico City (1968, $12 million), and Munich (1972, $495 million) were dwarfed by the more than $1.5 billion spent in Montreal. With the exception of Moscow (1980, $1.3 billion), subsequent games in Los Angeles (1984, $408 million) and Seoul (1988, $531 million) were nowhere near as costly. Unlike other host cities with existing sports infrastructure, Montreal had to build most of its venues. Social services suffered and several projects had to be put on hold. A water treatment plant, for instance, was delayed until 1981. For many years after the Olympics, Montreal was the only major city in North America that was still dumping waste into adjacent waterways.

The Montreal Olympics set precedents in many other ways. The participation of Aboriginal peoples in Olympic ceremonies, which occurred in large numbers for the first time in Montreal, has since become the norm for Olympics in Canada, Australia, and the United States. One of the major events, the equestrian competition, was held on private lands for the first time in Olympic history. It was, according to Paul Howell, one of the first major sporting events that combined formal project management with new computer technology. Unlike past Olympics, which have traditionally received financial support from regional and federal governments, the
Montreal Olympics were intended to be revenue-neutral and, for that reason, were almost entirely managed by the city. It was not, however, the media event the Olympics would become in later years. In fact, commercialization was discouraged at Olympics during these years. Whereas broadcasting rights in Montreal sold for approximately $35 million, Moscow raised $80 million in 1980 and Los Angeles raised $287 million in 1984. In 1976, though, the primary sources of revenue were a special lottery and commemorative coins. Nonetheless, the CBC provided an unprecedented amount of coverage—over 175 hours (five times the amount for Munich)—using new colour cameras, remote units, and other technology that vastly improved the quality of its reporting. It was so successful that the CBC committed to greater coverage of amateur sports and Olympic events in the future. But media coverage was also the cause of intense conflict. Drapeau reneged on his promise to the International Olympic Committee that the latter would retain its monopoly over television rights. The organization was already frustrated with the Munich committee, which had divided media revenue between television rights and technical services (and kept the latter, which amounted to millions of dollars). Montreal’s committee decided to do the same despite earlier assurances to the contrary, which resulted in an unprecedented intervention from the International Olympic Committee’s president, Lord Killanin. Killanin would later write in his memoirs that “the Montreal years, from the time the Canadian city was awarded the games to the XXIst Olympiad until their opening in 1976, were agonizing years for the Movement and, of course, me.”

Security for the Olympics was not a serious preoccupation before Montreal. In 1968, the Mexico City Olympics had been marred by the tragic death of over 300 peaceful student protestors who had been slaughtered by the Mexican army in an attempt to disperse the protest (they were protesting the use of public funds for the Olympics). But terrorism or, in fact, any political violence during the Olympics was unheard of. Security for the Winter Olympics in Sapporo, Japan in 1972 was largely the responsibility of 13,469 local police. By the 1970s, though, the games were taking place amidst a heightened fear of international and domestic terrorism. National liberation movements spawned terrorist violence across the globe. The Irish Republican Army, Palestinian Liberation Organization, Red Brigade, and a host of other terrorist organizations were responsible for bombings, hijacking planes, and other acts of violence. It was an era of international terrorism: in seeking targets abroad, they raised the possibility that anyone anywhere could be a target. According to the Global Terrorism Database, there were at least 4340 terrorist attacks between 1970 and 1976 alone. In Canada, the Front de libération du Québec was responsible for numerous bombings, robberies, and killings across the Province of Quebec throughout the 1960s. Then, in 1970, they kidnapped a cabinet minister and a British diplomat. The federal government invoked the War Measures Act, suspended civil liberties, and eventually captured the kidnappers, but not before one hostage was murdered. In the United States, there were more incidents of domestic terrorism in the 1970s than any other period in that country’s history: at least 680 incidents compared to 282 in the 1980s (77 fatalities in the 1970s, 22 in the 1980s).

Without exaggerating the extent of international terrorism in the 1970s—it was not a fact of daily life for the vast majority of Canadians—kidnappings or hijackings were becoming more pervasive. Political violence was gaining greater visibility: incidents of terrorist violence appeared frequently in newspapers and on television.
Authorities’ success in responding to terrorist incidents at the time was, as one RCMP analyst noted, mixed:

It is encouraging that four of the five recent widely publicized hostage situations which have taken place in the past three months, have now been successfully concluded in favour of law and order by using patience, non-violent tactics and refusing to accede to demands. In the fifth, however, the Austrian Government quickly acceded to the demands of the Arab gunmen and the commandos and hostages were flown to Algeria where the hostages were released. The fact that such incidents are continuing is a cause for concern. The dramatic appearance of the South Moluccan rebels in Holland and the tactics employed by them, both at the Indonesian Embassy in Amsterdam and aboard the Dutch train, in an attempt to gain their demands is evidence that threats may come from an unknown direction.28

And yet, Olympic organizers did not anticipate a serious terrorist incident in their security planning. The Summer Olympics in Munich in 1972 depended on a modest security force: 10,000 local police officers, 1,147 security service officers, and 883 police from outside Bavaria.29 Despite intelligence assessments suggesting a possible attack on Israeli athletes, the “police were caught completely off guard, ill prepared, ill equipped and not properly trained to handle such an incident.”30 Palestinian terrorists ultimately killed 11 Israeli athletes and one police officer in a fatal shootout at the airport after kidnapping the athletes from the Olympic Village.

A Canadian police delegation to Munich following the games concluded that “in the final analysis, security precautions [in Munich] were lax; passes were not checked, persons were not challenged for their identity.”31

Because of Munich, a highly visible security posture was adopted at the Seventh Asian Games in Tehran and the 1974 World Cup series in West German (both without incident).32 Munich was also a central preoccupation for the Winter Olympics in February 1976, which was hastily prepared in Innsbruck, Austria after Denver withdrew from hosting.33 Summer Olympics, however, were far more significant in size, scope, and visibility. Montreal was the first Summer Olympics since the Munich massacre, which created a serious problem for the federal government. Security had not been an integral part of the planning and bidding process, which was almost entirely a local initiative led by Mayor Jean Drapeau and the City of Montreal. The federal government had never wanted the Summer Olympics in Montreal, having already financially supported Montreal’s World’s Fair in 1967 (it was, instead, backing Vancouver’s bid for the Winter Olympics). Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau was adamant that the federal government would not pay for the games.34 Nonetheless, the RCMP warned Cabinet that they could not rely on local police to manage the security operation. Among other reasons, the federal government would invariably be held accountable if there was an incident. Besides, the RCMP alone had the organization and resources to properly plan security for the games.35 And yet by 1973 there was no security plan. The Montreal organizing committee appeared to be adopting the same philosophy towards security as the Munich organizers, which was of grave concern to the Security Service: “The German experience illustrates dramatically what can occur when constraints are placed on police and security authorities for the sake of an acceptable political
The principal lesson from Munich, according to an initial RCMP assessment, was that terrorists did not restrict their activities to domestic targets, but sought to use international events such as the Olympics to seek change at home. The RCMP believed that "the potential for violence at the Olympic games, from any one of several groups that are planning to use this occasion to publicize their causes, continues to be of major concern." The threat from international terrorism was exacerbated by the expansion of air travel. Seventy-two percent of visitors to the Olympics in Japan in 1964 arrived by plane, and 68 percent travelled by plane to Mexico in 1968. The RCMP estimated that seventy to eighty percent of visitors to Montreal would have to be screened at the airport.

Over five million people would attend the Summer Olympics in Montreal, more than Tokyo in 1964 and Munich in 1972. Six thousand athletes representing ninety-two nations competed in 21 sports. There would also be an unprecedented number of female athletes and new strident doping regulations: at least a dozen athletes were caught using steroids, which contributed to the momentum towards policing steroids in professional sports. Such a massive gathering was bound to strain Canada’s limited security apparatus. It was, in fact, uncommon for such a small country (25 million) to host a Summer Olympics. The security operation, which involved 26 venues, was also divided between several cities: the sailing competitions took place in Kingston while football, archery, pentathlon, and equestrian competitions were spread out across a half dozen other cities in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. However, there is no evidence in the RCMP’s documents pertaining to the Olympics of any intention to use the games to create a long-term legacy for policing in Canada. Producing a large-scale and technologically sophisticated surveillance state was simply not part of the Security Service’s vision. Still, the federal cabinet had passed an order in council in 1973 that called for a strong security posture for the Olympics. It set the stage for the largest security operation in Canadian history.

Planning for Montreal

“Our task, gentlemen, is to defend in the name of Canada and Mr. Drapeau, a running track, a swimming pool and 1400 porta-toilets against the forces of evil.” That was how an editorial cartoon appearing in the Vancouver Sun in 1976 depicted the role of the RCMP for the Olympics (see Figure 1). The RCMP, though, had no illusions about security for the Olympics. They understood that Munich had changed everything. Security planning for the Montreal Olympics involved extensive research into domestic and international threats. It was the first major effort by the Canadian security forces to plan on a global scale. The operation was a combination of local and national police. Planning for security officially began when Jean Ouimet (RCMP’s Chief Superintendent) was appointed Federal Security Coordinator and Guy Toupin (Montreal Urban and Community Police Force’s Assistant Director) was appointed the Chair of the Public Safety Committee. The RCMP assigned 252 staff to work full time between 1973 and 1976 to plan for the Olympics.

Security for any Olympics creates innumerable complications. International media attention provides a tempting target for terrorists. It requires a diverse security operation at almost every level, and the host nation’s prestige is vulnerable during the games. The sheer scale of the event, with so many countries from around the world, produces new threats with which the host nation lacks experience. It is one of the few international events that routinely attract participants from the most
volatile regions in the world. For this reason, although a local police officer was responsible for coordinating the security operation in Montreal, it fell to the RCMP to lead the effort. Its role in planning for security at the Olympics was succinctly summarized in a memorandum prepared in 1974 for the Solicitor General:

The main security responsibilities will fall to the R.C.M.P. These responsibilities include co-ordination of the activities of all Federal Government departments and agencies with respect to security; liaison with the Canadian Armed Forces; liaison with international police forces; e.g., Interpol, the F.B.I., Scotland Yard; cooperation with the concerned Canadian police forces, as well as participation in a Joint Force Operation to combat possible infiltration of organized crime into the 1976 Olympic Games; creation of special Criminal Investigation Branch Surveillance Section to supplement the already existing Surveillance Squad which is heavily committed to drug work.42

The committee responsible for the Olympics, COJO (Comité Organisateur des Jeux Olympiques), played no role in security planning. As one officer with the Security Service noted in an internal memorandum, “we should have no illusions over COJO’s interest in security, which is nil, and that the screening program is more in the interests of the security force than anyone.”43
The Security Service envisioned a program of domestic and international activities that would require a dramatic expansion of its current capabilities:

The following additional activities will be required: establishment of a separate secretariat within the RCMP to produce intelligence threat estimates in cooperation with other agencies and departments concerned for the Olympics; expansion of existing liaison with friendly intelligence agencies and the utilization of any necessary additional security intelligence links which may also require additional supporting staff; development of new security intelligence links where possible; establishment of secure and rapid communications links with major centers around the world; expansion of existing communications in major Canadian cities; increased penetration of groups or organizations in Canada which are prone to violent protest; establishment and maintenance of penetration of subversive groups with revolutionary aims; increase of resource personnel to dialogue with groups likely to demonstrate or cause other security problems as part of a continuing “diffusing” program.44

From the beginning, a key priority was identifying threats from abroad. This priority was highlighted in the Security Service’s final report: “Early in the planning stages, the specter of international terrorism was perceived as the major threat to the Olympic Games. Information exchanges between the Force and Foreign agencies became all the more important in light of the vast security undertaking involved in hosting an event of this magnitude.”45 To address threats from overseas, the RCMP established a series of new programs including:

- Attaché Liaison: One investigator from the Security Service was assigned for each country (or closely related country) to become familiar with all potential threats and to answer questions from the Attaché. The investigator was responsible for processing intelligence forwarded by foreign security personnel for that country.
- Quiet Diplomacy: Canada’s official personnel abroad were directed to pass information to the Security Service that might prevent incidents at the Olympics.
- Threat Assessments: Security service personnel gathered intelligence on real or perceived threats to the Olympics, analysed the information, and provided relevant intelligence to the appropriate government department or official.
- Overseas Liaison: Foreign Service Officers were directed to use the Olympics as an opportunity to improve and expand their relationships with overseas intelligence agencies.46

Each program had its own objective, but their common purpose was to use Canadian delegations, as well as foreign security and intelligence agencies, to collect information.47 There was also an extensive program of security screening and press accreditation, which dramatically exceeded expectations (double the original estimate). The RCMP worked with COJO to create a system of identity cards/badges for the games and, in 1975, confirmed the underlying principle that would guide its securing screening program: “Every person who has any contact with players or VIPs or the opportunity to contact them must be the subject of a security examination.”48 In addition, the International Olympic Committee had assumed that, as had been the practice in the past, all of its officials and delegation would be exempted from normal customs controls and inspections (including no inspection of baggage).
One of the federal governments’ first decisions, however, was to reject this practice. The Security Service was highly critical of German authorities for authorizing exemptions to border controls for Olympic participants: “The German Government carried this system to the point of virtually abdicating responsibility for entry requirements by accepting the Olympic identity card in lieu of a passport and visa. Control of the document was entirely by the Olympic authorities… The use of these documents as the single entry requirement would in effect mean abandoning Canadian immigration security.” 49 One of the first long-term security precedents arising from the Montreal Olympics was, therefore, requiring all delegations to undergo routine border screening. Furthermore, the RCMP established a Refugee/Defector program because dozens of athletes (mainly from communist countries) had sought asylum in Munich (there would be none in Montreal).50 To secure the borders, the Security Service recommended to Cabinet that the government implement legislation allowing the RCMP to summarily deport non-citizens if they were suspected of disrupting or engaging in violence during the games. Such legislation, according the RCMP, would require an exemption “from the Bill of Rights and most certainly will be attacked as an unwarranted invasion of civil liberties.” 51

The Security Service also implemented several domestic programs such as Domestic Defusing and Expansion of Domestic Intelligence Links. These programs were designed to collect and analyze information, produce threat assessments, and share information among federal, provincial, and municipal agencies. There was always the danger that Canadian citizens who were sympathetic to national liberation movements abroad would attempt to use the Olympics to advance the cause. For instance, the RCMP was worried that Ukrainian-Canadians might protest Soviet participation in the games or that Quebec nationalists would protest the Queen’s visit. There was also concern surrounding the Irish Republican Army and its supporters in Toronto and Montreal, although the Security Service determined that the likelihood of an attack was minimal.52 The Defusing Program was designed to “defuse Canadian activist groups which might be a threat to the games. Dissident groups and selected ethnic organizations were contacted by investigators across the country to solicit aid in keeping their militant elements under control during the Olympic period.” 53 The Olympics had, in this way, provided a useful opportunity for the Security Service to expand its domestic surveillance program and enhance links with ethnic communities in large cities.

The Security Service identified several organizations as potential threats. The Palestinian Liberation Organization was at the top of the list, as well as several other national liberation groups.54 There was little the police could do in these cases other than gather information with the assistance of allies such as Britain and the United States. On the other hand, the RCMP had a long-standing practice of infiltrating domestic advocacy groups, and was therefore able to use existing resources to monitor domestic threats. The Security Service identified dozens of potential threats within Canada, and appears to have been especially concerned about Quebec separatists, Native extremists, and black nationalists. French Canadian separatists were routinely cited in RCMP threat assessments for the Olympics, which is unsurprising in light of the Front de libération du Québec’s campaign of bombings and kidnappings over the previous decade.55 The interest in black nationalists and Native extremists was unusual, although it was partly informed by concerns about radical American activism spreading across the border. As historian Marcel Martel explains, “the RCMP feared that foreigners from the United States and the Caribbean would
create subversive organizations like the Internationalists, while foreign organizations like the Black Panthers would infiltrate Canadian based student movements.” A group of black students at Sir George Williams University in Montreal had rioted in 1969 in response to the university’s refusal to respond to their concerns about faculty racism. The riot, combined with growing concerns within the RCMP that the Black Panther movement was somehow radicalizing Canadian university students, led the Security Service to increase surveillance on black students in Montreal.56

The Security Service produced an entire file on “subversive activities among negroes,” and established a Racial Intelligence Section.57 The RCMP was similarly worried that Aboriginal peoples in Canada might draw inspiration from the militant American Indian Movement. The occupation of Anicinabe Park in Kenora in 1974 by a group of one hundred armed Aboriginals was followed by several other protests across the country. In none of these cases, however, was there any direct evidence of a threat to the games.

The Threat Assessments program reveals two important aspects of security planning. First, rather than attempt to imagine every possible threat (there is no mention, for instance, of a nuclear attack), the Security Service’s priorities reflected the historical context. They were reacting to the proliferation of radical social movements, domestic terrorism, and international terrorism (notably kidnappings and hijackings). Secondly, the RCMP was incapable of protecting against every conceivable threat. The breadth of potential threats was daunting. In the previous five years alone, two-dozen diplomats around the world had been kidnapped (and six others assassinated). In 1971 and 1972 there were at least 12 aircraft hijackings involving Canadian airlines (metal detectors were introduced in large numbers at airports in 1973).58 Anti-Castro activists initiated a series of violent actions in Canada, including the bombing of a Cuban trade mission in Montreal in 1972 that led to the death of a consular official.59 The arrest and deportation of a member of the Japanese Red Army in August 1975 prompted that organization to declare that Canada could be a target.60 Only weeks before the opening ceremonies in Montreal, German and Palestinian terrorists hijacked an Israeli plane at the Entebbe airport in Uganda, which led to a dramatic rescue mission by Israeli Special Forces. The threat assessment reports routinely referenced terrorist organizations such as the Irish Republican Army and the Palestinian Liberation Organization as well as organizations originating in Cuba and Japan.

There was also a generalized concern around Trotskyists and communists, which had been a preoccupation of the RCMP’s Security Service since its inception. The Security Service was also keeping on eye on Chilean refugees in Canada who might use the games to protest the dictatorship, as well as Haitian immigration because they were black and concentrated in Montreal. As part of the process of trying to identify all conceivable threats, there was a section in the threat assessments committed to right-wing radicals. The most common references were to the Jewish Defence League, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Western Guard. The former was described as a violence-prone movement in New York City with ties to organizations in Toronto and Montreal; the latter was a white supremacist organization based in the United States that had distributed hate mail to black people in Toronto.61 Furthermore, the Service was concerned with potential labour disruptions during the games such as striking penitentiary guards, hospital workers, building trades workers, or Hydro-Quebec employees. Given its limited resources, the RCMP was forced to produce a hierarchy of threats and focus its planning efforts on the most tangible dangers.
After determining the types of threats they might face, the RCMP began initiating a series of training programs for the Canadian Forces, the Security Service, and some local police. At CFB Gagetown, for example, Olympic security personnel received a range of training relating to narcotics, immigration and border control, bomb or incendiary device detection, and search and seizure powers. They were also trained on the use of force on civilians, surveillance practices, and terrorist threats. A total of 4796 police and military personnel were given training in preparation for the Olympics. The climax of the planning operation was seven mock “conflict games” that were held between 1975 and 1976. Cabinet had approved the allocation of thousands of Canadian Forces personnel to support the RCMP and local police during the Olympics. The operation was dubbed *Operation Stratacur* (Opération STRA†égiques et TAC†actiques d’Urgence). The primary threats identified in the planning operation included: hostage taking; occupation of a building; aircraft hijacking or accidents; bomb threats or suspicious parcels; illegal interception of police radio waves; labour conflicts; riots and crowd control; natural disasters; an attack on the Queen; an epidemic or shutdown of a major utility; and a disaster in the metro system. The conflict games demonstrated, among other things, the need for personnel with expertise in hostage negotiations. As a result, several “key personnel in the various police forces involved were launched into extensive training programs. Commanders for hostage situations were similarly trained and special tactical squads were organized, trained and equipped to handle each and every conceivable situation.”

After extensive research, planning, and consultation with foreign allies, the Security Service concluded that there was no evidence to indicate that a terrorist organization planned to attack the Montreal Olympics. But they had been wrong before. The lack of any explicit threat did not forestall the implementation of an impressive security operation.

### Security at the Montreal Olympics

Security for the games was an immense operation. The RCMP conducted 94,147 security checks on athletes, dignitaries, employees, media, and concessionaires (185 were flagged as potential security threats). It was responsible, with help from the Canadian Forces, for providing security for foreign dignitaries, airports, and border patrols as well as providing security for the Royal Family and 121 VIPs. Cognizant of what happened in Munich, the RCMP established a highly visible presence in the Village and accompanied athletes as they travelled within Canada. The plan was to have an obvious physical security presence that was, at the same time, not intimidating. A security force of 17,224 was assigned to the Olympics: 8,940 Canadian Forces; 1,606 Montreal Urban Community Police; 1,376 RCMP; and 1,140 Sûreté du Québec. Security personnel also included officers from the Metropolitan Toronto Police, Ontario Province Police, National Harbours Board Police, Manpower and Immigration, the Montreal Fire Department, and 2,910 private security guards hired by the Olympic committee. Security was provided for 13 competition sites and 27 training sites, as well as the Village. The Sûreté du Québec alone drew officers from 47 detachments across the province scattered over six districts, and drove 1,462,159 miles in 26 vehicles (and 112 hours in helicopters) over the 46-day operation. More than 32,000 security checks and guarding operations were conducted. Most of the major federal ministries, including National Defence, Immigration, Revenue, and Transport were implicated in the operation. The entire
national police force was mobilized to deal with the Olympics. Leave was suspended for many RCMP officers outside Ontario and Quebec to avoid creating dangerous gaps in security. In order to secure sufficient bilingual officers as well as those with specialized training (e.g., hostage negotiations or snipers), the force was required to transport officers from all over the country to Montreal.70

The overall operation was impressive.71 Altogether, more than 17,000 police and military personnel were mobilized to protect fewer than 6000 athletes. A major command and control centre was established in the RCMP's renovated “C” division headquarters in Montreal to coordinate among the various agencies, and a smaller headquarters was also established in Kingston. The Kingston and Montreal centres constituted the heart of the Olympic security communications network, albeit there were also special command centres in “A” division and the RCMP headquarters to provide communication links among senior managers and the venues. Rather than spreading the Village across the city (as was the case in Munich), the Montreal Olympic Village was a towering 19-story pyramidal structure with limited access and a ten-foot high wire fence. Athletes were driven to competition sites on buses with armed soldiers or police officers, while soldiers with automatic weapons patrolled the Village.72

The Montreal Olympics was a testament to the diverse and widespread nature of security planning that would become the norm for future Olympics hosts. The National Security Plan included air security (restricted air space); controlling ports of entry at land, air, and sea; harbour security; postal security (a detection centre to screen all mail destined for Olympic sites); and public relations and security briefings. Surveillance of side roads and rural areas was increased to prevent unauthorized entry into the country.73 Several “vital points” were identified, such as nuclear and hydro power plants, and given extra security from the Canadian Forces.74 Military personnel who were assigned to assist the police were deputized as law enforcement officers, which authorized soldiers in the absence of a policeman to arrest anyone breaking a law. National Harbours Board Patrol officers were temporarily appointed Immigration Officers at points of entry.75 The federal government passed special immigration legislation allowing the minister of immigration to deport anyone who might engage in violence during the Olympics. It was an unusual statute: it was only one sentence, and it gave the minister unfettered power to deport non-citizens while also denying them the right to appeal.76 Cabinet also revised, on the eve of the Olympics, its policy from 1967 for excluding immigrants who were considered security threats. The updated criteria made specific reference to terrorists and certain criminal activities while removing the long-standing prohibition on individuals who belonged to communist and socialist parties abroad.77 Meanwhile, local law enforcement was dramatically enhanced, including an expanded drug squad, a “scalper” squad targeting illegal ticket sellers, and a squad of 24 officers to police pickpockets. As a result, the crime rate in Montreal dropped by more than 20 percent during the games (there was also a decline in Criminal Code violations on local waterways as a result of increased harbour patrols).78 Even compared to much larger countries, this was an imposing security operation.

One of the major obstacles to implementing the security operation was inter-agency cooperation. As the Department of National Defence’s liaison noted in his initial assessment, the “overcoming of inter-departmental and federal/provincial/municipal differences is one of the major hurdles to cross.”79 There had been some recent improvements in Quebec. Because of the threat posed by
the Front de libération du Québec, federal and provincial/municipal police forces had been cooperating much more closely, and this cooperation facilitated security planning for the Olympics. For example, the RCMP, Sûreté du Québec, and Montreal Urban Community Police collaborated to produce a list of subversives who would be prohibited from working on Olympics-related projects. In Ontario, however, there were only weak inter-agency links. For the most part, each agency operated independently throughout the operation: the Sûreté du Québec and Ontario Provincial Police were responsible for security outside Montreal; the Montreal Urban Community Police carried out local policing; the RCMP was responsible for airports, foreign diplomats, and border patrol; and the Canadian Forces provided support to every agency.

The foreign and domestic programs noted above proved largely effective. Some countries refused to participate in the Attaché Liaison program, but overall the effort was successful. The Security Service concluded that the program “pioneered a new, more open contact between Security Service in different political spheres around the world. Acts of terrorism have given the Security Community a common meeting ground.” The program set the foundation for future practices: “This was probably the most successful and smooth running Security Service program in the Olympic context due largely to the abilities of the members involved. Without hesitation it is recommended that this program be reinstated at every conceivable opportunity.” The Domestic Defusing program was considered one of the most effective of the entire operation: there were no serious protests or demonstrations during the games. Only 3.3 percent of persons contacted in Montreal declined to meet with investigators, and the Security Service established numerous contacts within ethnic minority communities. The RCMP struggled to properly communicate and coordinate with COJO, especially with regards to accreditation, athletes’ transportation and reception, and civilian surveillance. There were innumerable interruptions that often delayed accreditation or made it impossible to implement proper security procedures. These difficulties, however, did not have serious consequences. The least successful program was Quiet Diplomacy. The program was properly implemented but it produced no tangible intelligence. Overall, though, the Security Service and Foreign Service gathered extensive intelligence in preparation for the games. Canada’s allies were supportive and, in turn, impressed with the results: “Comments received from our overseas posts indicate that we received excellent cooperation from foreign agencies both prior to, and, during the Olympic games. The Force has received praise from our foreign counterparts for the successful results of our Olympic security planning.”

The price for security in Montreal was, according to the current scholarship on the Olympics, more than $100 million. However, this figure is not based on evidence but, rather, statements from public officials and the media in 1976. In truth, the actual cost was substantially lower. An initial federal budget of $14.3 million dollars for the RCMP was later augmented to $23 million. Most of the costs were associated with additional salaries and overtime pay, accommodation, travel, renting space for the operations centre, administrative support, and equipment. In addition, the Department of National Defence estimated that it cost $21 million to provide security for the Olympics. COJO paid $1.8 million for private security. The Montreal Urban Community Police also had a budget of $1.8 million for the Olympics (including regular salaries that would have been paid anyway). The Ontario Provincial Police paid an extra $1.9 million to cover the cost of having
350 officers provide security for the royal visit and the sailing competitions in Kingston. The unknown costs are those associated with the Toronto Police Services, National Harbours Board Police, Manpower and Immigration, and the Montreal Fire Department for overtime pay. It is also unclear how much it cost for the Quebec Provincial Police to provide additional security for the Olympics; however, given the number of officers they assigned to the games, their expenses would have been no more than the Montreal police’s budget of $1.8 million. Therefore, at most, the cost for security at the Montreal Olympics was $52 million. This expense was inconsequential compared to the staggering expense of $1.6 billion to stage the event. Still, $52 million is an impressive sum. It was dramatically higher than Munich’s paltry $2 million budget four years earlier.

Technology was not a major part of the security operation. Security for the Montreal Olympics was largely dependent on manpower and local knowledge. For example, in 1976, police still relied heavily on manpower for surveillance: the RCMP assigned eight teams of nine officers for tracking people, and a single individual required three teams (27 officers). The scale of the Olympics also highlighted a weakness in the Security Service’s surveillance capabilities: each venue had to be assigned an officer who could recognize known subversives. The number of locations, however, made that impossible. They had to depend, rather, on poorly designed photo albums to identify individuals as they entered the venue. It was also extraordinarily difficult to employ officers from outside Montreal because surveillance required extensive knowledge of the city. Moreover, the Security Service had an “extreme scarcity” of bilingual officers. The RCMP was a predominantly English force (even the newsletters to its members were in English) with few francophone members, especially within the Security Service, and operated poorly in Quebec.

In this way, the police’s surveillance capabilities were severely limited. Nonetheless, the RCMP and local police did employ new tools for surveillance and information gathering for the Olympics. The main technologies procured for the games included: identification tags; high-speed fax machines; advanced sniper rifles; communication devices (e.g., 600 radios); special mobile vans for communication and surveillance; Cessna surveillance aircraft; and portable video transmitters. Fussey et al. argue that the Montreal Olympics were “the first widespread and systematic deployment of CCTV to feature at an Olympics.” In fact, the RCMP purchased only a dozen closed-circuit televisions, and these cameras did not play a major role in the security operation. Disembarkation cards were implemented in Canada for the first time in 1976, and became a permanent feature of air travel (Canada was one of the few countries in the world at the time that lacked a disembarkation card system). The airports and harbour patrol improved their system of passport and immigration controls during the Olympics.

In the end, there were no significant security problems or violent incidents. Only fifteen incidents were reported during the games, most of them as trivial as a journalist crossing security lines during the Queen’s visit, protestors distributing pamphlets, and one man charged with “being found naked in a public place” during the closing ceremonies. All the agencies involved in the operation offered a positive post-games assessment, although according to a confidential report prepared by the Department of National Defence’s planning coordinator, the lack of a serious security breach was fortunate: “The latter part of the [Operation Stratacur] document which dealt with MUCP operational plans was good, but the first part was, in a practical sense, confusing and, in an operational sense, useless.”
The idea of legacies is pervasive in contemporary public dialogue around the Olympics. Usually this is in reference to long-term economic and infrastructure benefits arising from hosting the games. However, there are security legacies as well. As the first major security operation in Olympic history, it is worth considering Montreal’s security legacy. Authorities in Canada now had concrete experience with a large-scale security operation. The security plan included a highly visible physical presence that involved flooding the streets with soldiers and police; developing inter-agency coordination and decision-making procedures; a massive accreditation program; intelligence gathering to prevent imagined threats; and experimenting with new communications and surveillance technologies. There is no question that the Montreal Olympics did have a legacy for security planning and policing, albeit it did not fundamentally transform policing in Canada.

One of the games’ legacies was to provide the RCMP’s surveillance and security operations with better technology such as surveillance cameras or sniper rifles. One report indicated that the new devices “will be absorbed within the Force and put to immediate use.” In the past, the RCMP had to rent aircraft for surveillance, but thanks to the Olympics they now owned their own plane. Among the major acquisitions for the games were 1500 portable radios and 25 base stations. The most expensive investment was a computer system called COILs (Computerized Olympic Integrated Lookout System). Until the Olympics, police stationed at airports used loose-leaf notebooks with names and pictures to identify individuals who were banned from entering the country. But as one Inspector noted on a popular CBC television show in 1975, the new computer system meant “that the old days of border checkpoint black books are gone.” Thirty-two terminals were placed at various Canada-U.S. border crossing and airports. COILs contained information on individuals who, because they were security threats or had outstanding warrants (the list included lost or stolen passports), were not allowed to enter Canada. COILs enabled immigration officers to use disembarkation cards to input a name into a computer and quickly determine if the individual was barred from entry or was on a watch list. The program identified over 16,000 “undesirables,” and the Security Service added the names of 1000 individuals from their own files for the Olympics. Disembarkation cards for airports became a common feature of air travel in Canada following the games.

The RCMP gained numerous specialists who had been trained for the games: hostage negotiators, motorcyclists, auxiliary motor escorts, antitheft and VIP security details, and tactical intervention teams. Since the RCMP was the country’s only agency responsible for domestic and international intelligence gathering, and was also a criminal investigation force, the technology would “undoubtedly pay big dividends in combating crime…. [technology] should provide a new means of combating violent crimes such as Hostage situations, Snipers and Hijackings that have become more prevalent in the World during the 70’s.” The RCMP’s Security Service concluded in its final report that “as a result of the Olympic games, the Force has obtained some of the most up-to-date equipment available in the world today.” This assessment may have been exaggerated. COILs proved to be too unwieldy and costly; the Security Service largely abandoned the system after the games. There were only six terminals still in operation four years later, and the Department of Immigration was developing a new system to replace COILs. Technology such as
surveillance cameras never became pervasive in Canada. At the time, even high-speed faxing machines were considered uncommon among the security personnel in Canada. Technology, therefore, played an important role, but it was hardly transformative.

New programs for intelligence gathering and diffusing information were developed and successfully implemented during the Olympics. The Security Service had detailed dossiers on vulnerable areas as well as domestic and international threats. These programs had a long-term legacy. The Marathon Briefing Program for Immigration and Customs Officers produced stronger links between the RCMP and Customs/Immigration Personnel. As a result of the Threats Assessments Program, “a much fuller understanding of the benefits and limitations of intelligence gathering has been conveyed not only to various Directorates within the Force but also to other Police Organizations without whom the success of the Security net would have been impossible.” The Overseas Liaison program “enabled our overseas posts to strengthen and expand contacts with foreign agencies.” There were also domestic legacy benefits. The Domestic Diffusing program strengthened contacts in ethnic communities in cities like Montreal and Toronto:

Our members are now better informed than ever before on ethnic problems and plan to continue to utilize these sources of information . . . . There seems little doubt that this was our most valuable Olympic effort. The Olympics provided a definite rationale for using defusing, but its success suggests that, depending on the circumstances, it might have broader use in continuing operational tactics.110

The security exercises, which culminated in the four-day simulation code-named Mount Olympus, demonstrated the need for better coordination among security agencies. Still, they were an effective training strategy, and the Security Service recommended that they be used in all future mega-event planning operations.111

The Olympics proved to be a valuable learning experience in many other ways. The security screening system worked, but it was plagued with delays as a result of poor coordination with COJO. And the identification badges were badly designed and easily manipulated, although the RCMP had nonetheless managed to implement the most widespread program of accreditation in its history. In addition to learning the necessity of a better working relationship with civilian organizers, the RCMP concluded that the Threat Assessments program produced such a vast amount of information that it became “a morass of unrelated information from widely diversified interest areas.” It was necessary to create a more sophisticated classification system for processing and identifying relevant information. The Olympics also demonstrated the need for more bilingual officers, greater harmonization among geographically distant units, and the need for more centralized coordination.112 In this way, perhaps the most enduring security legacy of the games was networking among local, national, and international security agencies. The Montreal Urban Community Police described the collaboration as “sans précédent” (without precedent).113 For the Sûreté du Québec, the games permitted “everyone to benefit from learning the diverse methods each agency applied in this project while at the same time reinforcing the principle of collaboration between these agencies and forging close ties among their members.”114 The Ontario Provincial Police believed that the coordination among agencies was essential to the operation’s success, a sentiment
that was shared by the Canadian Forces. The RCMP’s Security Services was equally sanguine. The Metropolitan Toronto Police noted in its final report that the games created a unique opportunity for police officers to learn the planning and operational strategies of other agencies, as well as develop potentially long-term ties that would, among other things, facilitate sharing of resources in emergencies.

Only the Department of National Defence’s planning coordinator offered a mild criticism: ‘‘There have been gains made in military/police cooperation in this large scale operation which should be of value for the future. There are still areas for improvement to overcome the lingering elements of distrust between forces.’’

In addition to legacies, the Montreal Olympics should be seen as a turning point in how security planners in Canada perceived imagined threats. For most of the twentieth century, the RCMP’s obsession with communist subversives had produced an institutional culture that was slow to adapt to new threats. As historians Steve Hewitt and Christabelle Sethna explain, ‘‘hampered by the belief that communism was not just the main threat but the only national security threat, the RCMP initially responded [to social movements in the 1960s] by interpreting all left-wing activism as somehow communist-led or communist-inspired.’’ A shift began following the emergence of the Front de libération du Québec, which raised the spectre of a domestic terrorist movement. But it was really the Montreal Olympics that confirmed a profound institutional shift underway within the national police force. The language used in the RCMP’s archival records relating to the Olympics reveals a rising concern with international terrorism in security planning. The RCMP Security Service was exclusively concerned with domestic and international terrorists—communists are almost never mentioned in the security planning documents. As Pete Fussey et al. point out, ‘‘despite the diversity and complexity of Olympic-related threats, since Munich 1972 Olympic security planning has been dominated by the threat of terrorism.’’ This concern for terrorism facilitated the RCMP’s further integration into a global network of information sharing. The Security Service initiated numerous programs to work with international agencies and foreign governments to identify terrorist threats. In its final assessment of the operation, the Security Service noted that ‘‘efforts on behalf of the Olympic security in the past two years have introduced us to new contacts and agencies not previously aware of our role. Closer relations with some established contacts occurred as well with the result that these contacts now have a better appreciation of our interests and capabilities.’’

The Montreal Olympics was a turning point in Olympic history in one other critical way: the games were more expensive to police than any previous Olympics. The security operation in Montreal was larger, more visible and highly centralized. It was by far the largest security screening operation in Canadian history at that time. The games also inaugurated a new era of using advanced technologies such as COILs to collect vast amounts of data on citizens. Montreal set a precedent that would produce a legacy of immense costs for future events. The Los Angeles Olympics in 1984 cost more than $150 million for security, and Seoul paid at least $111 million in 1988. The Innsbruck Winter Olympics in 1976 was considered one of the largest peacetime security operations in Austria’s history. In 1980, the Russians simply declared martial law and lined the streets of Moscow with troops and tanks. The Los Angeles Olympics was the largest peacetime security operation in American history at that time. Within a generation of the Montreal Olympics, the cost of security alone for hosting the Summer Olympics would easily exceed $1 billion.
In a curious historical sidebar, the topic of security costs was raised again in January 1980. The former Federal Security Coordinator chaired a committee to explore the implications of potentially hosting the Summer Olympics in 1980. The United States’ decision to boycott the Moscow Olympics following the invasion of Afghanistan raised the possibility that Montreal might be asked to act as an alternative venue. It is noteworthy that, drawing on their experience in 1976, the committee was less than enthusiastic about the prospect of another major security operation:

In our collective opinion, [security] will fall far short of the level of effectiveness we would consider necessary for such an event. Further, because of the demands it will impose on our manpower resources, it will have a serious debilitating effect on our enforcement obligations across Canada. Federal enforcement particularly will be crippled.125

It appears that, in what was perhaps a portent of things to come, one of the key lessons arising from the Montreal Olympics for security planners was that hosts would have to bear an immense and potentially unaffordable burden for policing the games.

Notes

1. Cody Lang was the Research Assistant on this project. This research was supported through funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.
2. The Olympic Stadium had to be closed in 1991 when more than 50 tons of concrete fell off the roof.
3. According to Kristine Toohey and Tracy Taylor, the legacy of Munich was that “armed guards and police were now conspicuous at venues and in the host city.” In addition, Michael Atkinson and Kevin Young insist that “security arrangements in Innsbruck (1976), Montreal (1976), and Lake Placid (1980) were unprecedented in both scope and material resources employed on-site. Perhaps a result of being held on “neutral” political grounds (Austria and Canada), or heavily militarised grounds (the United States), an air of tight security and political confidence permeated each of these Games.” Michael Atkinson and Kevin Young, “Political Violence, Terrorism and Security at the Olympic Games,” in Kevin Young and Kevin B. Wamsley, eds., Global Olympics: Historical and Sociological Studies of the Modern Games (New York: Elsevier, 2005), 274; Kristine Toohey and Tracy Taylor, “Mega Events, Fear, and Risk: Terrorism at the Olympic Games,” Journal of Sport Management 22, no. 2 (2008): 451–469.
5. Pete Fussey et al. provide a useful summary of the security literature on the Olympics, which as they note includes no serious study of Montreal. Pete Fussey et al., Securing and Sustaining the Olympic City: Reconfiguring London for 2012 and Beyond (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 5–6.


11. Before 1976, Canada had hosted a handful of international sporting events: the Empire Olympiad in Hamilton (1930), the British Empire Games in Vancouver (1954), and the Pan-American Games in Winnipeg (1967). Canada has also hosted numerous Commonwealth Games, including Edmonton in 1978.


14. These figures are rounded up. They are also based on U.S. dollars and are not adjusted for inflation. They were derived from using Jennings’ figures on the costs of the Olympic games using 2008 U.S. dollars, and then adjusted for inflation using the Bank of Canada’s inflation calculator: http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/. In other words, Jennings’ figure of $406.8 million for the Tokyo Olympics in 1964 was adjusted to $9 million by using the calculator to determine what $406.8 million in U.S. 2008 dollars would have been in 1964 U.S. dollars. Jennings’ calculations are based on
a Canada-U.S. dollar exchange rate in 2008 that was almost on par (at the same value), which did not necessitate adjusting for currency valuation. Will Jennings, *Olympic Risks* (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 36.

15. Wright, “The Political Economy of the Montreal Olympic Games” (see note 7 above).

16. Aboriginal people, however, had little control over shaping their role in the opening ceremonies. Forsyth and Wamsley, “Symbols Without Substance” (see note 7 above).


18. The federal government was hesitant to support another major international event in Quebec so soon after Expo 67, but nonetheless provided extensive indirect financial support. House of Commons, *Hansard* 4 (1975), 6962.


22. “Sport events have been targeted by terrorists on an estimated 168 different occasions from the Munich Olympic attack in 1972 through to 2003. These have included a car bomb planted by ETA which exploded outside a stadium in Madrid in 2002 before a European Champion Leagues football semi-final match injuring 16 people; a plot by Islamic extremists to bomb a football stadium in Manchester in 2004; and, also in 2004, a bomb threat which occasioned the evacuation of approximately 70,000 fans, players, and officials at a football match at Bernabeu stadium in Spain... However, the tightening of security has not deterred all further terrorist attempts, as terrorists have since targeted different facets of the Games. In 1992, the Basque separatist group Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) and a Marxist group known as Grupo de Resistencia Antifascista Primo October (GRAPO) independently attempted to interrupt the Barcelona Olympic Games by bombing utilities. Both attacks caused relatively minor inconvenience but were unsuccessful in gaining widespread media attention or disrupting the event.” Taylor and Toohey, “Perceptions of Terrorism Threats at the 2004 Olympic Games” (see note 4 above), 101.


26. Ibid. According to the Department of National Defence’s liaison for the Olympic games, the Quebec police were far more effective at working with the army because of their experience in 1970. Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), RG146, volume 4363, f. Olympic Secretariat Cooperation with Canadian Forces, Final Report: DND Olympic Liaison Officer Operation Gamescan, August 10, 1976.


33. “The general director for public security, Dr. Oswald Peterlunger, emphasized again and again that all security measures were to be taken to avoid as far a possible a repetition of the Munich tragedy.” Quoted in Fussey et al., *Securing and Sustaining the Olympic City* (see note 5 above), 43.
37. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4367, f. Cabinet Committee on Security Intelligence (Planning and Threats), Security Assessment, February 20, 1976.
40. Leonard Morris, “Our task, gentlemen, is to defend in the name of Canada and Mr. Drapeau, a running track, a swimming pool and 1400 porta-toilets against the forces of evil.” *Vancouver Sun*, February 25, 1976 (political cartoon).
47. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4363, f. Summer Olympics volume 6, Historical and Chronological Olympic Security Facts, n.d.
49. Some estimates indicate that thirty to forty people sought asylum in Munich. One RCMP report notes that the Munich organizers claimed as many as 119 sought asylum. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4363, f. Olympic Secretariat Cooperation, Final Report “A” Division Security Service Planning, September 14, 1976.
51. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4367, f. Cabinet Committee on Security and Intelligence – Planning & Threats, Security Assessment Royal Visit, February 20, 1976.
54. A spokesperson for the PLO stated publicly that there would be no attempt to disrupt the Montreal Olympics. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4367, f. Cabinet Committee on Security and Intelligence – Planning & Threats, Security Assessment, February 20, 1976.
58. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4362, f. Olympic Secretariat – Cooperation 1, Memorandum to Working Group on Security, May 16, 1973; LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4363,


60. The RCMP was concerned that the Jewish Defence League might engage in violence against Palestinians visiting Canada during the games. In contrast, the threat from the Western Guard was an embarrassment to black athletes arising from criminal activities such as hate mail. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4363, f. Quarterly Report to the Interdepartmental Committee, Threat Assessment 8th Status Report, September 18, 1976.


62. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4364, f. training, Assistant “J” Division CIB Officer to Commanding Officer “J” Division (Border Patrols), February 4, 1976.


64. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4363, f. Quarterly Report to the Interdepartmental Committee, Contingency Planning, October 5, 1976.


67. “In view of the Munich incident in 1972 and other terrorist actions around the world where hostages have been taken for various criminal and politically motivated reasons it is essential that personal protection be afforded to athletes and team officials of the XXI Olympiad, while in Canada during the Official period of the Games.” LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4358, f. Wallet, National Security Plan, 1976. “As the Olympic Villages will be one of the few venues where entire delegations are gathered together at one time, these Olympic installations are considered a prime target for any terrorist action.... Virtually all Olympic security forces will, in varying degrees, have an involvement with the Olympic Village security.”


74. Other vital points included the administrative offices of the Olympic committee; the Montreal aqueduct; communications systems including Bell Canada and Radio Canada; and transportation systems such as rail lines. CPSJJO. 1976. La Sécurité Publique des Jeux Olympiques, 39.


77. The Security Service’s proposed criteria, which was later adopted by Cabinet in a more expansive version, read as follows: “(1) Any person who is a member of a terrorist organization or any organization that advocates or is capable of acts of violence. (2) any person by whose words or actions shows himself to support any organization or person who publicly or, privately advocates practices the use of violence. In all cases, any reasonable doubt to the security status of the applicant will be decided in favour of the peaceful staging of the XXI Olympiad.” LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 3867, f. Brief – Olympic Secretariat D Operation Background Material, Confidential Re. Summer Olympics 1976 Policy Security Screening, January 17, 1975; LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4367, f. Cabinet Committee on Security and Intelligence – Planning & Threats, Revised Criteria for the Exclusion of Immigrants and Non-Immigrants on Security Grounds, May 15, 1975.


85. Most recently, this figure was cited in: Fussey et al., Securing and Sustaining the Olympic City (see note 5 above), 179. Various declarations from public officials, as well as media reports, regarding security costs ranged from $80 to $100 million. However, these sums were broad estimates that were never based on evidence. It is also unclear if this sum includes salaries that would have been paid irrespective of the Olympics. In contrast, the figures noted here are based on the reports and budgets produced by the RCMP and DND, and were recently released under the Access to Information Act. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4872, f. 1980 Olympics Task Force, Memorandum Deputy Commissioner to Director Protective Policing, January 28, 1980. Commission d’enquête sur le coût de la 21e olympiade. Québec, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Cost of the 21st Olympiad, vol. 1 (Quebec: Queen’s Printer, 1980), 28–29. House of Commons, Hansard, vol. 4 (1975), 6962. Bill Kokesch, “Games Security Screen ‘a Tremendous Success,’” The Gazette, August 2, 1976; Eddie Collister, “Planning for a Possible Nightmare: Security Will be the Tightest Ever,” The Gazette, July 16, 1976.


87. These figures do not include salaries for RCMP or DND personnel, which would have been paid irrespective of the Olympics.

88. The cost to the Montreal police was mainly for salaries since COJO paid for security equipment such as radios. Steve Kowch, “Olympic Police Costs Rated at $8 million,” The Gazette, July 16, 1974.

89. The expense for policing the Olympics in Ontario, not including costs to municipal police, was $1.9 million according to media reports. The Wintario program’s budget—as stated in Public Accounts—confirms a transfer of $1,300,800 for “Olympic projects,” most of which (according to statements from the Solicitor General) was for policing. Government of Ontario, Public Accounts, volume 2 (Toronto: Queen’s Printer, 1976–1977): 453. Mary Trueman, “Ontario Will Spend $1.9 million on Police for Olympic Games,” The Globe and Mail, June 18, 1976. Ontario also paid over a million dollars to hire private helicopters to help
deal with forest fires during the Olympics. Under normal circumstances the province could depend on military assistance, but the army gave priority for its helicopters to Olympic security. Robert Williamson, “Military Copters Couldn’t Leave Games Duties to Fight Ontario Fires,” The Globe and Mail, June 15, 1975.

90. The DND budget for 8940 soldiers was $21 million dollars. The combined Montreal and Quebec police force assigned for security during the Olympics was only 2746, and DND would have incurred far greater costs for transportation and equipment. There were also Toronto and Ontario provincial police assigned to the sailing competitions in Kingston, but they were a marginal force compared to Quebec. It is highly unlikely the cost to local police forces was more than half the DND budget. It is also worth noting that the Commission of Inquiry into the Cost of the 21st Olympiad estimated that provincial and municipal governments incurred costs of approximately $33 million for the Olympics. Policing would only constitute a small part of this amount. Howell, The Montreal Olympics (see note 6 above), 181. Québec, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Cost of the 21st Olympiad (see note 85 above), 1, 28–29.

91. The precise cost, according to the commission of inquiry into the cost of the Olympics, was $1,646,000,000. Québec, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Cost of the 21st Olympiad (see note 85 above), 1, 29.


95. In addition to equipment listed throughout various RCMP reports, see also: CPSJPO. 1976. La Sécurité Publique des Jeux Olympiques, 44, 105–106.

96. Fussey et al., Securing and Sustaining the Olympic City (see note 5 above), 179.

97. CCTV cameras are hardly mentioned at all in the security planning documents. Even by 1981, there were only a handful of places in Canada where the RCMP had installed close-circuit television cameras, such as Parliament Hill and the National Arts Centre. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4873, f. estimates-security service-economic summit, Memorandum from Special Events Section to Officer i/c “D” Operations, February 2, 1981.

98. Only a single violent incident was reported: a man throwing a Molotov cocktail at a building for reasons unrelated to the games. Howell, The Montreal Olympics (see note 6 above), 84–85. CPSJPO. 1976. La Sécurité Publique des Jeux Olympiques, 227–230.


102. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4368, f. CIB Surveillance, physical security briefing program, 1974.


105. “One of the most important segments of these controls implemented specifically for the Olympics was the modernized Micro-Fiche Lookout System containing approximately 16,000 names and aliases of undesirables, criminals and terrorists who were of interest to Canadian authorities.” LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4359, f. Wallet Attachments, Final Report Security Service, 1976.
106. The program was temporarily suspended immediately after the Olympics. LAC, RCMP, RG146, volume 4359, f. Wallet Attachments, Final Report Security Service, 1976.
111. The conflict games highlighted a general lack of understanding of each police force’s roles and jurisdictional responsibilities.
113. Translated by author from: “chacun de bénéficier des methods de travail diversifies des differents organismes implique`s dans ce projet et a la meme occasion a renforce` et les principes de collaboration entre ces organismes et les liens d’amitie` entre leurs members.” CPSJIO. 1976. La Se´curite´ Publique des Jeux Olympiques, 139.
114. Ibid., 160.
115. Ibid., 186.
119. Steve Hewitt and Christabelle Sethna, “Sex Spying: The RCMP Framing of English-Canadian Women’s Liberation Groups during the Cold War,” in Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Greg Kealey, eds., Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012). Furthermore, Hewitt and Sethna argue that, in the context of the RCMP’s surveillance of the women’s movement, the police “remained trapped in an anti-communist framework, and sought only to link women’s liberationists to Trotskyists and other radicals.” Ibid., 137, 48.
120. Fussey et al., Securing and Sustaining the Olympic City (see note 5 above), 39.
124. Security for the Athens (2004), Beijing (2008), and London (2012) Olympics all cost over $1 billion. The 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics’ security costs were just shy of this mark, but security at the Sochi Olympics in 2014 will almost certainly have cost over $1 billion. Of course, a major factor in these rising costs is the 9/11 terror attacks. However, security costs were already rising: security in Atlanta cost $87 million in 1996, and $128 million in Sydney in 2000. The exception is Barcelona, where security costs in 1992 were an estimated $65 million. The problem with many of these figures is that they are based on published reports. These amounts have not been confirmed through access to official records. Jennings, Olympic Risks (see note 14 above), 37.