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Longtime Toronto nightclub security man among dead in Mexico nightclub shooting



The Canadian Press (mailto:)
Published on January 17, 2017



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In this photo released by Por Esto de Quintana Roo, a first responder aids a woman wounded after a shooting at an electronic music festival in the Caribbean coast resort of Playa del Carmen, Mexico, early Monday, Jan. 16, 2017. The deadly shooting occurred in the early morning hours outside the Blue Parrot nightclub while it was hosting part of the BPM electronic music festival, according to police. (Por Esto de Quintana Roo, via AP)

Tributes poured in Monday from friends and colleagues of a longtime Toronto bouncer described as a "gentle giant" who died when a gunman opened fire in a crowded beachfront nightclub in Mexico and caused the deaths of five people.

Kirk Wilson was identified by Global Affairs as one of those killed at the crowded beachfront Blue Parrot nightclub as it throbbed with electronic music.

Mexican authorities initially said two Canadians were among the five dead but Global Affairs Canada has since confirmed Wilson as the lone Canadian fatality. Global Affairs has also confirmed at least two other Canadians were wounded.

Authorities said at least one person died in the crush to escape and some of the 15 people wounded or injured were hurt in the stampede.

The Quintana Roo state government said Wilson was working as a BPM security supervisor at the Blue Parrot when the shooting scattered the concertgoers at the international festival being held at the Playa del Carmen resort.

Longtime friend Neil Forester said Wilson was one of several people from the Toronto area lending a hand to the festival's Canadian organizers.

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"He was just a genuine, one-of-a-kind guy," said Forester, who described Wilson as having no ego and no attitude. "He was the first guy you called whenever you needed something."

Forester, a corporate event promoter in Toronto, described Wilson as a fixture on the Toronto club scene — a stocky 6-5 man with waist-length dreadlocks who freelanced in security and running the front door of various Toronto clubs.

"He had a nickname — 'Kirk with the dreads,'" Forester said. "He was just a really amazing guy that treated everyone with respect — whether it was patrons, co-workers or whoever it may be."

Forester said Wilson, 49, was married with two children and lived in the Hamilton, Ont., area.

Forester said Wilson's wife didn't want to talk to the media and the family is "obviously devastated and shocked," adding that Wilson's children were in school when the family learned of his death.

A Go Fund Me page set up Monday to support Wilson's family indicated his children are aged 6 and 7. One of the contributors to the account, which had raised almost \$30,000 by late Monday toward a goal of \$100,000, described Wilson as her niece's husband.

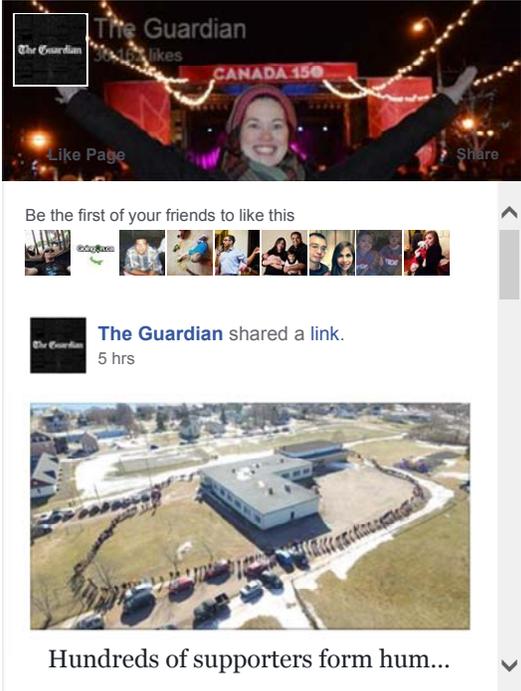
Carol-Anne Dwyer-Chemko wrote that Wilson "really was the nicest person anyone could ever meet" who cared about everyone and "really was the 'gentle giant.'"

Tennis Canada issued a statement late Monday saying Wilson "was an integral part of the security team at Rogers Cup in Toronto for almost two decades" and was always "friendly, outgoing, and happy to help." The statement said Wilson will be "greatly missed by the Tennis Canada and Rogers Cup families."

On other online sites, musicians and clubgoers have expressed sorrow and condolences and thanked Wilson for keeping them safe over the years.

A company that employed him also expressed its condolences.

"We can confirm that Kirk Wilson was a longtime employee and great friend of INK Entertainment," the firm said in a statement. "Our team is overcome with grief over this



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terrible tragedy and would like to express our sincerest condolences to his family and friends for their loss."

Quintana Roo State Attorney General Miguel Angel Pech ruled out any terror attack, but said the shooting erupted when festival security personnel tried to stop a man from entering the club with a gun.

The U.S. Embassy confirmed that one of those killed was a U.S. citizen, and the Quintana Roo state prosecutor's office identified her as Alejandra Villanueva Ibarra. The office said she died in the crush to escape the shooting.

Italy's Foreign Ministry confirmed one of its citizens died, and the prosecutor's office identified him as Daniel Pessina and said he was part of the BPM staff.

The Mexican victims were identified as Rafael Penaloza Vega and Geovanni Ruiz Murillo. The prosecutor's office said Ruiz Murillo was wearing a BPM shirt. Pech said a Mexican woman was seriously injured and that eight of the injured, including two U.S. citizens, were treated for minor injuries.

Pech said the gunman himself apparently escaped, though three people had been detained nearby. It was not known if they had been involved in the shooting.

"We know of another shooting incident that occurred near the nightclub, but we are investigating whether that is related" to the deadly shooting, Pech said.

The shooting occurred near the largest exit, setting off chaos as concert goers had to scramble over a metal fence to escape to the beach. At least one person died in the crush to escape and some of the 15 people wounded or injured were hurt in the rush out, authorities said.

Jeffrey Castelein, 33, a fork lift operator from Belgium, said he heard 15 to 20 shots before he and his friends leapt the fence. "At first we didn't realize, and then everybody fell down and you had to hide a little bit. And then we went out the back by the sea."

His group got separated and had to wait for everyone to meet back at the apartment. "It was the longest 20 minutes of my life," Castelein said.

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Pech said the shooter apparently tried to enter the nightclub about 2:30 a.m., but was denied access because he had a gun. He then began to exchange fire with another person, and festival security personnel who tried to stop the shooting came under fire, Pech said. He said 20 bullet casings from three different pistols were found at the scene, but it was unclear if the security detail was armed or fired any of the weapons.

Quintana Roo Gov. Carlos Joaquin attributed the shooting to "the intolerance and conflict of interests between two people," but did not specify what those conflicts were. He said the two exchanged gunfire.

Playa del Carmen has largely been spared the violence that has hit other parts of Mexico.

The state tourism department said the shooting was an "isolated act of violence" and stressed that "the situation in Playa del Carmen is under control and Mexican and foreign tourists can feel protected and safe."

— By Sidhartha Banerjee in Montreal, with files from Peter Cameron in Toronto and The Associated Press.

The Canadian Press

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Tributes poured in Monday from friends and colleagues of a longtime



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Gordon H. Mill

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At Andrews of Summerside on Friday January 27, 2017 of Gordon H. Mill of Mills Point aged 79 years. Born in Clermont July 31, 1937, son of the late Harold and Ruby (Moase) Mill. Husband of Mary (Rogers) Mill. Father of Austin (Colleen) Mill. Grandfather o...



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At Beach Grove Home on Wednesday, January 25, 2017 of Marie L. Greenan of Charlottetown, formerly of Kensington, age 93 years. Wife of the late J. Frederick Greenan. Loving mother of Bonnie (the late J. Earle) Arsenault, Brian (Ramona), Emma (James) Raffe...



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