

Don Denton/News staff

MARINE DANCE

Marine traffic including a sailboat towing a small boat, a Harbour Ferries' ferry, a Harbour Air floatplane and a speedboat move through the Inner Harbour.

Victoria officers part of air pot bust

Keith Vass
News staff

Two Victoria Police Department officers were part of an airborne pot-busting operation last month.

They were the VPD's contribution to a marijuana eradication effort that saw officers from the RCMP, Saanich Police and the VPD cut down 19,000 marijuana plants growing on Crown land around Vancouver Island. Transportation was provided by Canadian Forces Sea King helicopters.

"They were dismantling those crops and taking them down, doing all the things that are involved," said Sgt. Grant Hamilton, spokesman for the VPD.

The city force only contributed the officers' time,. Nothing beyond that came out of the department's budget, said Hamilton.

"It's good to work with other agencies, get the experience, get the knowledge of the growing business, especially as it applies to that rural, outdoors environment," he said.

While there was no estimate how much of the marijuana destroyed may have been destined for Victoria, Hamilton was confident the operation was good for the city.

"The alternative is to do nothing... any time you can limit the supply of drugs to the street, that's safer for everyone."

Cpl. Greg Cox said it was "reasonable to assume" the majority of it may have been intended for Victoria, because it's the Island's largest city.

He estimates the plants could have produced between one to two million joints.

Two arrests were made during the operation. Police found two people tending a crop near Campbell River.

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NATO

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A rally is planned for noon Saturday (Sept. 8) in front of the hotel, "if we can get there through the security," he said.

But he added other protesters may have other plans.

"I expect there might be any number of things happening because there are some people doing some of their own organizing of other events," he said.

Sgt. Grant Hamilton of the Victoria police department said police don't plan on interfering with peaceful protests.

As long as things stay peaceful, protestors should be able to approach to the edge of the hotel grounds.

"If they're there passing out pamphlets to passersby, that's not an issue at all. I can't say it's a carte blanche, it'll depend on any other assessments we're getting, but if they're just on Belleville Street or the sidewalks out front, no problem," he said.

Victoria Police will be responsible for security outside the building, including the grounds, while security inside will be handled by the federal government and the military.

Hamilton said police are "planning for every contingency, but if you think we're going to be standing around waiting in riot gear, no."

Federal officials remain tight-lipped about the conference. Cmdr. Dave Scanlon, a spokesman for the Department of National Defence, would not confirm the Grand Pacific as the venue for the meeting earlier this week.

"Sort of for security reasons, we don't want to make commitments until right to the last minute. So we're going to stick to that policy," he said.

Despite the dearth of information that's being cleared for public release, Hamilton said the VPD is getting all the information they need to plan security for the conference.

"We've been working with them, we've been meeting with them regularly on the event so we know how many delegates are coming, how many people are involved, the length of the conference, itineraries, the whole shebang."

