## G20 prisoners treated well: York officer

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Police flung open the doors of the G20 prisoner detention facility this week in the wake of criticism about the conditions in which detainees were kept during the summit last weekend.

Pressure on police to explain their actions, which included a protest march in Toronto, were building in the days following the G20 Summit.

However, a York Regional Police officer who worked in the facility rejected any suggestion that prisoners were mistreated.

Prisoners were treated with the "utmost respect", said Sgt. Gary Phillips.

Sgt. Phillips, was one of 450 York police officers who worked during the G20.

Several York police motorcycle officers also lent a hand to security efforts on the streets, traffic bureau commander Staff Sgt. Brad Bulmer said.

Sgt. Phillips was assigned to the prisoner detention centre for the duration of the G20 protests. He compared downtown Toronto Saturday to a "war zone", in the aftermath of clashes between raucous protesters, some of whom used the violent black bloc tactic.

Reached at the detention centre Sunday as police and protesters faced each other outside the downtown Toronto makeshift jail, Sgt. Phillips said the facility was locked down. No one was allowed in or out of the centre, he said.

"You cannot prepare enough for something of this magnitude," he said.

"When you see police cars burning on the street, you never expect to see it here," he said.

The jail eventually reached its maximum capacity and two Toronto police stations were needed to help process prisoners, Sgt. Phillips said.

Critics of the detention centre have raised concerns about conditions inside.

A statement by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association accused police of denying detainees access to lawyers.

Prisoners were fed, given medical treatment and access to phone booths for calls to lawyers, Sgt. Phillips said.

He added none of the officers on prisoner detail was armed.

When black bloc protesters were brought in Saturday and Sunday, they became very vocal.

"It was a noisy scene," he said, adding more than 800 people were processed through the facility.

York police officers were stationed along Queen and Adelaide streets in downtown



SGT. GARY PHILLIPS: Downtown Toronto looked more like a war zone, officer says.

Toronto over the weekend, Chief Armand La Barge said Tuesday.

York police public order unit and bike officers were also integrated with officers from other forces, he said.

Earlier this month, Chief La Barge told the York Region Media Group about 450 York officers would be deployed to the G8/G20 events.

The cost of the officers would be covered by Ottawa, rather than York taxpayers, the chief said.

York officers gained experience in handling large-scale events, logistics, communications and command structure during the G8/G20 summits — information they will be able to use here, he said.

Opinions on the summit and protests were polarized.

Amnesty International called on Ottawa and the province to launch an independent review of the security measures, including opportunities for public input.

"The amount of money, reported to be in excess of \$1 billion, that has been spent on security measures ... over the past several days has been unprecedented," the organization

"On one hand, extensive acts of vandalism and other violence were carried out and on the other hand, thousands of individuals felt nervous and uneasy about exercising their right to engage in peaceful protest."

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However, Sgt. Phillips considered the security effort a success, noting the fence separating G20 delegates, including Prime Minister Stephen Harper and United States President Barack Obama, was not breached.



LUCAS OLENIUK/TORSTAR

About 450 York police officers were included in the G20 integrated security unit.





Unionville Society

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