

# Investigating espionage, military conducts security sweep at Halifax naval base

Sub-Lieutenant Jeffrey Paul Delisle was charged Jan. 16 under Canada's Security of Information Act and faces the possibility of life in prison if convicted.

Experts are scanning Trinity, a naval communications and surveillance centre, for evidence of espionage or mechanisms designed to leak information to outsiders.

"The place is being investigated .... [for] software, hardware, bugs, the works," a military official said.

Trinity staff have been temporarily moved a few kilometres away.

"As part of a normal and prudent business contingency plan, personnel belonging to elements of HMCS Trinity have been relocated to 12 Wing Shearwater for an undetermined period of time as a security precaution," said Captain Karina Holder, spokeswoman for the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal, who commands the military police.

The military declined to say how many people work at Trinity, a unit that gathers and analyzes confidential and secret information for the Royal Canadian Navy. Perhaps most critically in the eyes of Canada's international partners, it receives confidential defence information from allies.

Separately, Monday, the naval officer at the centre of sensational espionage charges lost his lawyer in a hastily scheduled courtroom appearance. Cameron MacKeen, who would not explain why he was quitting, pledged to assist his former client in finding new counsel.

In the meantime, SLt. Delisle will be represented by legal aid.

The case fell to Mr. MacKeen by chance. He was on duty at the courthouse when the matter arose and he was assigned.

A former reporter, Mr. MacKeen is active in the federal Conservative Party and, according to a spokesman for Defence Minister Peter MacKay, on personal terms with the powerful Nova Scotia politician.

He would not comment when asked whether these ties were behind his decision to quit.

SLt. Delisle, an intelligence officer, was arrested and charged earlier this month. He stands accused of passing information to a "foreign entity" and is being held in custody locally.

The sailor did not appear in court Monday and was patched in from prison by telephone. He barely spoke, saying little more than "Yes Ma'am" in response to a series of procedural questions.

SLt Delisle's next appearance, originally set for Jan. 25, has been postponed until Feb. 28. On that day a date for a bail hearing will be set. He will remain in custody until then.

The RCMP alleges that the sailor leaked confidential government information to a foreign entity over a four and a half year period – and as recently as January tried to do so again.

As the charges reverberate across the country, SLt. Delisle's family and ex-wife are coping with the fallout.

Reached at her home in suburban Ottawa, the sailor's former spouse said she was "overwhelmed" by the reports.

"Of course, I didn't know. It was shocking and my head is just reeling with all this news," Jennifer Lee Delisle said. "We're just coping. The family ... we're just managing."

The couple, married in 1997, had four children before separating in April of 2008, according to court documents that cite unspecified "certain differences." As part of the agreement, the Canadian Forces member assumed the couple's debts on three credit cards and a consolidated loan.

They divorced in 2010.

The charges surprised many who knew him.

In a brief message to The Globe and Mail, Angelica, the couple's oldest child, wrote simply: "my father is an amazing dad."