

官官相護

guan1 guan1 xiang1 hu4

A member of the police force in Calgary, Canada, went berserk and attacked a 12-year-old boy, chasing him from his front yard through the garage into the kitchen and started biting him.

The boy had to receive treatment from the hospital, and his father said the attack “broke the safety of the neighborhood” and the attacker, identified as one “Marco,” must be executed.

The police immediately ruled out such punishment, which is clearly cruel and unusual. But it promised the usual internal investigation, adding that the wrongdoer has been suspended from duty, and might be “transferred to another agency,” according to a CTV report.

Cynics might point to this case as yet another example of “官官相護” (*guan1 guan1 xiang1 hu4*). “官” (*guan1*) is “a government official,” “an officer,” “相” (*xiang1*) “mutually” and “護” (*hu4*) is “to defend,” “to guard,” “to protect.” Literally, “官官相護” (*guan1 guan1 xiang1 hu4*) is “official, official mutually protect.”

Idiom by Lon Yan

It means “officials, or bureaucrats, shield one another in wrongdoings.” It describes the practice of officials covering up mistakes for one another.

Police brutality is a serious matter and must be dealt with seriously. But what can you do when a police dog turns rogue, except put it in a “high-security” kennel for quarantine?

“官官相護” (*guan1 guan1 xiang1 hu4*) used to be a big problem but the local administrative process has become more transparent with vigorous check-and-balance mechanisms like the Ombudsman and the ICAC.

These days, what is causing rather greater concern is “官商勾結” (*guan1 shang1 gou1 jie2*) – collusion between officials and commercial interests.

Terms containing the character “護” (*hu4*) include:

保護 (*bao3 hu4*) – to protect

護送 (*hu4 song4*) – to escort

護士 (*hu4 shi4*) – a nurse

護照 (*hu4 zhao4*) – a passport