



East Timor spying row: Australia asked to return documents seized in ASIO raid on Bernard Collaery's office

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East Timor's government is demanding that Australia return all material seized by its the Australia Security Intelligence Office (ASIO), during two raids in Canberra last week.

Agents took a number of documents when they raided the office of lawyer Bernard Collaery who is acting for East Timor in its spying case against Australia.

East Timor is attempting to have a \$40 billion oil and gas treaty it signed with Australia quashed in The Hague.

It alleges Australia had the advantage in negotiations because the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) spied on the Timorese cabinet in Dili, during the negotiation process in 2004.

Last week, ASIO agents also seized material from the home of a former ASIS officer, who was preparing to give evidence against Australia in the case at The Hague.

The officer had his passport cancelled, meaning he could not travel to the hearing.

Attorney-General George Brandis said that he authorised the raids on national security grounds, but he has denied they were linked to the legal action.

Senator Brandis said the material would not be passed onto anyone involved in the legal proceedings.

Lawyers for East Timor have now written to Senator Brandis seeking a copy of ASIO's search warrants and requesting that all documents and data taken during the raids are returned.

Meanwhile, the Greens are stepping up pressure for an inquiry into Australia's spy agencies, amid further revelations about their operations in East Timor.

East Timor claims that Australia's intelligence services used the cover of an aid program to install listening bugs inside the East Timorese cabinet room.

Timor's natural resources minister, Alfredo Pires, says he has identified four spies who were involved but he will keep the names secure.

Greens leader Christine Milne says the reports are worrying.

"People working in Australian aid programs around the world will be under suspicion," she said.

"It is really time for the Government to step up here. The Greens have called for an inquiry twice into what's been going on into spying and overreach in East Timor."

Australia has updated its official travel advisory for East Timor to warn Australians that protests near the Australian Embassy in Dili may continue.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advisory says peaceful protests were held across the road from the embassy on December 5, 6, and 9.

It says the overall level of advice is to "exercise a high degree of caution" in East Timor because of the uncertain security situation and the possibility of civil unrest.

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