

# Was East Timor involved in its own espionage against Australia?

Brisbane Times, March 12, 2014

Comments 10



**The Hermit**

*Bill O'Chee is a consultant and former Nationals senator.*



The International Court of Justice hears Timor-Leste's case against Australia over claims of espionage. *Photo: Nicolas Delunay*

Although the court case has only just opened, the social media jury has already rendered judgment and decided that Australia spied on East Timor at the time of negotiations on the Timor Gap resources treaty.

That may or may not be the case. No evidence has yet been seen.

But the big question is not whether we spied on East Timor; it is whether East Timor spied on us.

When I was in Parliament, I took a great interest in the countries to our north. In a nation that lives on its exports, it's an important thing to do.

During this time, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was very much opposed to East Timorese independence. They believed separatist movements not only opened the door to terrorist groups, but might lead to hostile countries gaining a foothold close to our shores. It was a message they frequently delivered at Parliamentary briefings.

Given this, it would surprise me if our secret service didn't make some effort to spy on the East Timorese government. Assuming they did, the primary motive may not have been commercial advantage.

DFAT would definitely have wanted to ascertain if countries like Russia, China, or even Vietnam were seeking to influence the fledgling country in its dealings with Australia. There were certainly enough politicians wanting to know if this was the case.

But how did East Timor get its hands on the unseen evidence of Australian spying? Was it done through some spying of its own?

Interestingly, the East Timorese have been rather coy about this. All we know is they claim a former ASIS officer gave them details about a bugging programme.

Now, if the East Timorese set out to persuade an ASIS officer to give up this information, it is spying, pure and simple. And how did this agent come to their attention? Were they targeting Australian officials and seeking to corrupt them? Did they bribe him or her? Did they use blackmail?

Even if the former agent came to them, the East Timorese are not off the hook. Under Australian law, espionage includes obtaining information about the operations of Australia's intelligence agencies, or their methods or sources.

So, if East Timor does have some evidence of Australian spying, they could only have obtained it by doing some spying themselves.

Of course, none of this should be a surprise. Australia has long been a soft target for the espionage activities of foreign countries. Look, for example, at how the left of Australian politics was thoroughly infiltrated by the Russians during the Cold War.

It would only stand to reason that East Timor would want to know as much as possible about the intentions of one of its biggest neighbours and aid donors. As well, it would want to influence our politicians and community leaders. All of this is espionage.

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### 10 comments so far

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»Behaviour you would expect from a perpetrator: Blame the victim and accuse them of the same. Classic sociopathic sophistry!«

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**dunkeroo** | March 12, 2014, 3:00AM

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»Let's wait and see who approached who shall we.«

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**Alex** | Finley March 12, 2014, 12:10PM

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»Bill«

»Your logic is faulty.«

»Australia has been caught out cheating. Rather than accept that fact, and like a self centred child you choose to point the finger accusing the other!!!«

»Irregardless of your baseless argument, two wrongs neither make a right nor condone wrongful action.«

» - - «

»Oh, by the way, did you know the US is spying on parts of Australia using 3D photography?«

»If not, go talk to the satellite 'space' sales teams.«

»Cheers«

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**Dalliance** | March 12, 2014, 6:43AM

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»"Australia has long been a soft target for the espionage activities of foreign countries" says the ex-MP who sold secrets to US intelligence-gathering firm Stratfor. Yes that's right folks - Bill O'Chee was revealed by WikiLeaks as a source for Stratfor, a company which employs many former CIA agents and peddles information for profit around the world. «

»<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/wikileaks-names-exsenator-as-informant-20120301-1u4gw.html>«

»Now Bill is arguing that even if an ASIO spy approached Dili and gave them evidence, they are still guilty under our spy laws? Well that is patently ridiculous. Let's see what international courts have to say.«

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**Gary Lord** | Gold Coast March 12, 2014, 7:22AM

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»Australia's track record in regard to Timor is pathetic and reflects an ideology that bullying a country that is smaller, poorer and has less influence is alright if we can make a dollar out of it. Strangely enough that reflects the LNP ideology that large companies leaning on individual workers is alright as well. In fact the LNP ideology appears to be based on the premise that anything is alright as long as someone they favour makes a dollar and as long as it's not a worker. As an aside, under Work Choices the LNP sought to eliminate collective bargaining thus allowing powerful corporations to bully workers but John Howard supported collective bargaining on the part of his beloved Australian cricket team. There's always room for hypocrisy in any ideology.«

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**One Sided** | Brisbane March 12, 2014, 7:27AM

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»Ministers of the Crown directed commonwealth intelligence assets for private commercial interests and have since obtained personal benefit as a result. They've been caught and are fighting a desperate rearguard action. The article is second rate apologia for unethical swill and a fourth rate diversion.«

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**davros** | March 12, 2014, 9:19AM

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»The East Timorese became masters of spying during the Indonesian occupation, something we recognized during INTERFET, yet chose to ignore in the subsequent years because The Australian problem is that ASIS are so arrogant that they think they are above the abilities of these lesser nations. ASIS was good for a short period after World War 2 when its ranks were filled with ex-military people, now its just another public service job. What O' Bill or should it be Walter here has also failed to understand is that in any spy relationship there is the handler and the source, Bill, lets face it you will always be a source«

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**Terry** | Brisbane March 12, 2014, 9:33AM

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»I think the East Timorese were probably busy in Australia for quite a time before independence, and no doubt getting into the Labor Party, the unions, and the Greens, which is where their support base always was. They probably did a good job of cultivating the media as well, and most of those journalists wouldn't have even known they were being used.«  
»We are naive if we believe the other countries around us aren't going to spy on us, any more than we would be naive to believe the Chinese and Americans aren't spying on us.«

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**Tages** | March 12, 2014, 3:54PM

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»Hilarious. So there was a wealthy and powerful 'Dili Lobby' bankrolling ALP, Democrat and Green candidates, and dominating the Murdoch press and the ANU, whereas the 'Jakarta Lobby' was weak and powerless, and struggled to make its voice heard. Pull the other one!«

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**Ken** | March 13, 2014, 2:26AM

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»it has been widely reported the ex ASIS agent was disgusted that Minister Downer became a lobbyist for Woodside, the spying in his mind was done not for the National interest but for the commercial benefit of a particular firm«

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**ken** | March 13, 2014, 1:58AM