

Ex-Timorese PMs may testify at spy trial

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A criminal case in Canberra involving an international bugging scandal has been kicked down the road again.

However, it has emerged two former East Timorese leaders could be called to give evidence in a preliminary hearings.

The ACT Supreme Court has heard there will be further delays to hearings surrounding evidence to be used in the government's case against Bernard Collaery.

The lawyer is accused of breaching national security laws by helping his former client, an intelligence agent known as Witness K, blow the whistle on the bugging scandal.

Government lawyers have asked for more time to comb over 1600 pages of media clippings surrounding the incident, to determine whether Collaery or his client were the source of the stories.

The matter is due back in court next week, with Collaery contesting the charges and fighting a trial by jury next year.

Collaery intends to call former East Timorese prime ministers Jose Ramos-Horta and Xanana Gusmao as witnesses in the hearing.

He also wants Australia's former Indonesia ambassador John McCarthy, former foreign minister Gareth Evans and former defence chief Chris Barrie to take the stand.

Government lawyers are also asking for some evidence to be provided to the court only, with Collaery's lawyers saying it should be made public.

During a brief hearing in Canberra on Wednesday, Justice David Mossop acknowledged the eventual trial would take longer than first expected, given the amount of evidence to be produced.

Witness K is being prosecuted separately.

Australia bugged East Timor's cabinet rooms in 2004 during negotiations over a gas and oil treaty.

Australian Associated Press