

Why did Canada's security agencies allow the alleged terror plot to grow?

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Media reports, largely based on government, police and Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) sources, indicate that Canada's security forces allowed the alleged Toronto terror plot to take shape and grow over many months, even years, and that they did so with the approval of their political superiors.

These reports, and the record of Canada's police-security forces, strongly suggest that the alleged terrorists, almost all of them young men and boys, were manipulated by one or more agent provocateurs.

Since last Saturday, the minority Conservative government, the CSIS, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and the corporate media have sought to incite public fear with claims that only prompt action by police-security forces spared Canadians from a series of atrocities plotted by a group of seventeen Al Qaeda-inspired terrorists. Speaking at a press conference last weekend, RCMP Deputy Commissioner Mike McDonnell said that the alleged Toronto-based terrorist group "posed a real threat. It had the capacity and intent to carry out these attacks."

But the story that emerges from a close reading of the press reports is very different: the Toronto group's every move was being closely monitored by the state; security forces long had sufficient incriminating evidence to arrest many or all of the 17, but did not do so, preferring to "smash the terrorist plot" at a time of their choosing and in a manner suited to their and the government's purposes; when some of the group allegedly did seek to obtain materials to make a sizeable bomb, those with whom they contracted to take a shipment of ammonium nitrate fertilizer were undercover police operatives.

The CSIS and the RCMP say members of the alleged terrorist group were under surveillance since 2004. Senior ministers in the current government and its

Liberal predecessor admit to having been made aware months ago of the police-intelligence operation against the Toronto group. Liberal Party Public Security Minister Anne McClellan and Defence Minister Bill Graham were apprised at the latest by December 2005.

Christie Blatchford, a *Globe and Mail* crime reporter well known for serving as a conduit for the police and prosecution, reported Thursday that by last December, when some of the group allegedly participated in a guerrilla training camp in rural Ontario, the authorities "had plenty of evidence" to make arrests. Commandos from Canada's elite special operations military unit, Joint Task Force-2, were deployed only a few minutes' helicopter ride from the camp, and an RCMP-CSIS surveillance team closely scrutinized the activities there. Yet the only intervention mounted by state authorities was to convince residents of the nearby village of Washago—who had become aware of the obtrusive training camp in their midst—not to tip off the "terrorist suspects" that villagers were aware of their presence.

Blatchford says her security service sources told her that as their lengthy surveillance progressed, "they could hardly believe ... what had happened to the relatively innocuous little group of rank amateurs with which they had begun."

In other words, the state authorities, according to the admission of their own security operatives, watched as a terrorist group developed, choosing not to intervene when they had ample evidence to make arrests and lay criminal charges.

The length and intensity of state surveillance, the willingness of state authorities to allow the alleged terror conspiracy to grow, and the fact that members of the group were ultimately caught in an RCMP-CSIS sting operation all strongly suggest that the group was

infiltrated.

According to Blatchford, the CSIS had called the alleged terrorists “in for interviews at an early stage of its lengthy investigation, frankly hoping to scare them off.” In fact, such interviews, as well as the type of harassment to which one of the accused, Fahim Ahmed, was subjected, are classic techniques for “turning” people into informants and provocateurs.

According to a *Globe and Mail* article by Hayly Mick and Colin Freeze, Ahmed had complained about a year ago to the imam of a suburban Toronto Islamic center that CSIS agents had convinced a prospective employer not to hire him, and Ahmed’s wife soon thereafter separately complained to the imam that CSIS agents had pushed her when they showed up at her house while her husband was out.

Canada’s security forces have a long history of “dirty tricks” and provocations, including keeping alive the terrorist Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) in the early 1970s after it had collapsed due to state repression and the bankruptcy of its own petty-bourgeois nationalist political perspective. Revelations of RCMP illegal activities forced the Trudeau Liberal government to strike a royal commission, which resulted in the creation of a new security service, the CSIS, legally empowered to do many things that the RCMP had done illegally.

Under the Anti-Terrorism Act rushed through Canada’s parliament in the weeks immediately following the September 2001 terrorist attacks, the rules of evidence have been changed so as to enable state authorities, in the name of national security, to prevent the accused in terrorist cases, their lawyers, and the public from ever knowing the exact nature and source of key parts of the prosecution’s evidence.

This will make it all the more difficult to determine in this and other cases where terrorist conspiracy, if any, ended and where the manipulation and provocation of Canada’s security agencies began.

The CSIS, the RCMP, Liberals like Anne McClellan, the *Globe and Mail* and *National Post*, and last but not least Stephen Harper and his Conservatives have long complained that “Canadians don’t get it” when it comes to terrorism. By this they mean that the public has been resistant to proclamations of the establishment that Canada is a frontline state in the “war on terrorism,” and must therefore undergo dramatic

changes in its domestic, military and foreign policies akin to those pushed through by Bush, Britain’s Tony Blair and Australia’s John Howard.

These forces have welcomed the alleged Toronto terror plot as a so-called “wake-up call” for Canadians.

For the minority Conservative government, which faces widespread popular opposition to last month’s decision to dramatically expand the Canadian Armed Forces’ intervention in Afghanistan and to its drive for still closer relations with the Bush administration, the Toronto terror “sensation” has provided a convenient vehicle to press for a sharp lurch right.

While the government has not yet announced any dramatic policy shifts, it has signaled that it will table new anti-terrorist measures in the fall session of Parliament, and Public Security Minister Stockwell Day has announced that Canada’s foreign intelligence capacity will be greatly expanded. According to Day, it only remains to be determined whether this will be done by changing the mandate of the CSIS or establishing a new foreign Canadian security service.

The *Globe and Mail* seized on the alleged Toronto terrorist plot to editorialize for no weakening of the Anti-Terrorism Act, now up for a mandatory 5-year review, while the *Post* has called for “billions more” to expand the personnel of the CSIS and the RCMP.



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