

Australian anti-terror raids part of US war drive

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Anti-terror raids conducted in Australia on Thursday and ongoing security operations are part of an international campaign by the United States to step up its war drive in the Middle East and suppress anti-war opposition around the world, under the pretext of dealing with the threat posed by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or ISIL.

Within hours of the raids in Sydney and Brisbane, conducted by more than 800 police and security forces—the largest of their kind carried out in Australia—US Secretary of State John Kerry invoked them as underscoring the necessity for congressional support for US actions and for international backing.

Addressing the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Kerry said: “I don’t know how many of you saw it today, but the Australians today arrested a large group of people that they suspected of being ISIL, members, supporters, sympathizers in Australia who were planning some kind of extravaganza of brutality in Australia.”

Mark Twain once famously remarked that a lie can travel halfway round the world before truth has time to get its boots on. So it proved in this case.

The raids combined police on the ground, the closure of streets, forcible entry of homes and helicopters in the air, accompanied by saturation media coverage. They resulted in the arrest of one man, who, it was claimed on the basis of one phone call, was involved in a plot to randomly seize a member of the public, behead him and have the gruesome execution posted on YouTube.

Subsequently, it emerged that the word “beheading,” which was featured in all the media coverage in Australia and internationally, was never used during the alleged phone call. According to acting Australian Federal Police Commissioner Andrew Colvin, while the alleged plot involved violence against someone,

“how that was going to manifest itself, we’re not 100 percent sure.”

The misreporting and outright falsifications, however, served their political purpose in helping stampede public opinion in the US, Australia and internationally behind the renewed “war on terror.” The timing could not have been more fortuitous, coming on the eve of Australian forces being dispatched to the Middle East, further anti-terror legislation being presented to the Australian parliament, and the US pushing at the UN for its new Middle Eastern war.

Addressing the UN Security Council on Friday, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop used the terror scare to justify Australia’s commitment to the US war. ISIL’s actions, she claimed, left “in no doubt the severity of the threat” to “Australia, our friends in South East Asia and the wider world.” Security and law enforcement agencies had “taken steps ... against a group in our country inspired by ISIL who were seeking to emulate their brutality in Australia.”

Her remarks were followed by a politically significant comment from Kerry. Congratulating Australia for its support, he said. “We are particularly appreciative of the extent of Australia’s commitment from obviously so far away. It’s very meaningful, it is very important and we thank you for your leadership.”

Kerry’s comments were not simply *pro forma* or “for the record.” They underscore the crucial political role being played by Australia in the US war drive, not only in the Middle East, but also in Eastern Europe, where the Australian government, within hours of the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 on July 17, issued strident denunciations of the Russian government.

At this stage, Australia is one of only two countries, France being the other, that has committed military

forces to Washington's Iraqi operations. Prime Minister Tony Abbott has left open the door to their extension into Syria by stating that “at this point in time” it is not “intended” that Australian forces operate outside Iraq.

The *World Socialist Web Site* is not in a position to ascertain all the facts surrounding Thursday’s raids, but what the government and the police have presented should be treated with great scepticism, given the past record of terrorist scares. There is the distinct possibility that the “terror plot” was orchestrated through a sting operation or entrapment involving undercover agents.

Such methods have previously been used in Australia and other countries. Shortly before the raids, a Rochester, New York food store owner was charged with giving “material support” to ISIL. He was arrested after purchasing firearms from a “confidential source” retained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Whatever the precise circumstances surrounding the latest allegations, there is no question as to where political responsibility lies for the danger of terrorist attacks.

When it suited their purposes, the US and other powers, with Australia playing a leading role, supported right-wing Islamist forces in Syria as they sought to overthrow President Assad. In October 2012, Bob Carr, the previous Labor government’s foreign affairs minister, declared that the Syrian president’s assassination would help “even up” the conflict.

The continuing wars, drone operations and illegal targeted killings carried out by the US from Afghanistan and Pakistan through to the Middle East, coupled with ongoing attacks on the democratic rights of Muslim populations in Europe, the UK, the US and Australia, create fertile conditions for the recruitment of disoriented youth to right-wing terror groups.

The political purpose of the raids, which so far have produced just one arrest, was made clear by Abbott. Responding to a protest meeting of Muslims in the Sydney suburb of Lakemba over the extent of the operation, he said the raids had been a “show of strength” and a “demonstration.” However, the demonstration effect was not aimed at securing the safety of the population but, as Kerry’s remarks make clear, adding grist to the mill of the US war propaganda.

Whatever the outcome of the legal proceedings in this

case, the attacks on democratic rights will be intensified under legislation to be introduced into the Australian parliament next week. This will be coupled with the further demonisation of Muslim populations, as already demonstrated by the vitriolic denunciations in the media and by government and opposition spokesmen of the Lakemba protests.

As the US war drive unfolds, the attacks on democratic rights will not stop with Muslims. Backed by the entire political and media establishment, they will be directed against all those who oppose US imperialism and its allies, such as Australia.

Imperialism, Lenin said, almost 100 years ago in the midst of World War I, is political reaction “all down the line.” That warning has again been fully confirmed by this week’s Australian terror raids.



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