

Australian “Anzac Day plot” boy entrapped by police

Cheryl Crisp
12 May 2016

Evidence has emerged that the 16-year-old boy arrested in Sydney on April 24—the eve of the annual Anzac Day war commemorations—on the vague charge of “acts in preparation for, or planning a terrorist attack” was a victim of police entrapment. Entrapment occurs when undercover law enforcement agents entice, persuade or provoke someone into speaking about or preparing to carry out incriminating behaviour.

According to media reports on May 2, during the teenager’s unsuccessful bail application, the prosecution claimed he had sent messages over a period of five nights, from April 16 to 24, stating that he wanted to obtain a firearm and learn how to make a bomb.

It is now known that the alleged messages were part of conversations, on a social networking app, between the boy and an undercover agent posing as an overseas extremist. Who initiated these conversations remains unclear, but media accounts of the questions the agent asked the boy raise serious questions about the direction in which the teenager was being led.

This revelation followed days of allegations by police sources, uncritically regurgitated by a complicit media, most notably the ABC’s “7.30” program, that the boy was in touch with “senior Australian Islamic State (IS) recruiter Neil Prakash.” Prakash, 24, and another young Australian citizen were recently assassinated by US air strikes in the Middle East, with the Australian government’s active participation.

This was the second year in a row that police, media outlets and government leaders used the arrest of a teenager to promote a scare campaign about a terrorist attack on Anzac Day, the official celebration of Australia’s involvement in World War I and every other major imperialist war.

Other media reports claimed the boy was in regular

communication with an “offshore male.” All this, the police knew to be false, because he was actually in discussions with a police operative.

On May 2, media reports indicated that the agent asked the teenager why he wanted to do something on April 25. He allegedly replied: “[K]uffars (non-believers) celebrate Anzac Day and I want to terrorise them on that day.” In another exchange, in which the question was not revealed, he allegedly stated: “I want to learn to make a bomb.” Asked about his mechanical knowledge, the boy allegedly replied: “I am an electronic apprentice.”

It was reported that police watched the 16-year-old leave his parents’ home for a meeting, allegedly to obtain a firearm. There is no indication as to who suggested such a meeting. The police have now conceded the meeting never took place and the young boy has denied leaving the house.

If convicted, the teenager faces a possible life sentence. Despite his young age and the reliance on evidence elicited by a police agent, a magistrate has denied his bail application. His lawyer warned that a psychologist had advised that he would suffer irreversible psychological damage if kept in custody until the trial, which could be as late as the end of June.

The entire police case seems to be based on communications between a vulnerable boy and an undercover police agent. The police have said the youngster was placed on a police “de-radicalisation” program when he was 15, following a highly-publicised raid on his family’s home in May 2015 by police and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO).

This means that the boy was under close surveillance all along. Contrary to media assertions that the police program provided him an apprenticeship, a free gym

membership, psychological counselling and regular visits from a “community contact,” he reportedly received nothing. Instead, all the indications are that the program served only to provide police with the conditions to entrap him.

In a media statement at 4 a.m. on April 25, Commander Chris Sheehan of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) asserted: “In Australia and around the world, the age of people radicalised is getting younger, with online grooming tactics similar to those used by sexual predators.” There appears to be more truth in this comment than was intended. Police predators were conducting the grooming.

Nevertheless, the claims of the police generated banner headlines, alleging that the teenager wanted to “terrorise’ Australians on Anzac Day.” This has not only prejudiced his trial. The coverage was designed to frighten the population with the prospect of imminent acts of violence.

The link to Anzac Day highlights the dubious nature of the allegations. Anzac Day, along with the nationalism and militarism that surrounds it, has been promoted and glorified by governments, both Liberal-National and Labor, with the complete support of the Greens, for the past five years, focussing on the centenary of World War I. The purpose is to indoctrinate the next generation of youth, and prepare them for another such imperialist war between the major powers.

Police entrapment is becoming endemic in Australia and internationally, creating sensational allegations of impending terror attacks. These scare campaigns are used to justify an increasing assault on basic legal and democratic rights.

In 2004, a jury refused to convict Zeky “Zak” Mallah, 18, of terrorist offences after it was proven that a police agent, posing as a freelance journalist, offered him \$3,000 to make a video recording, in which he purportedly vowed to conduct a suicide attack on an ASIO office.

However, in 2008, Muslim cleric Abdul Nacer Benbrika and six of his 11 co-defendants were convicted of being members of a terrorist organisation after a police infiltrator offered Benbrika cheap ammonium nitrate. Police secretly filmed Benbrika when the agent took him to a remote hilltop to show him how to detonate an ice-cream container of the

explosive.

Then in 2009, five Lebanese and Somali-born men were charged with “conspiring to prepare for a terrorist act” against the Holsworthy Army Base in Sydney. During the trial, it emerged that a police infiltrator incited one of the defendants to talk about “jihad” and then convinced him to visit the army base. Three of the accused were sentenced to 18 years’ jail, based on the evidence provided by the police agent.

Under Australian law there is little or no protection for defendants against such entrapment methods. Courts can exclude evidence that is illegally or improperly obtained, but only if they rule that the need to protect the individual against unlawful and unfair treatment outweighs the so-called “public interest” in securing conviction.

Each new arrest provides the pretext for further “anti-terrorism” laws, which deepen the assault on democratic rights. Australia’s state and territory governments are currently drafting laws, proposed by the federal Liberal-National government, that will allow suspects as young as 14 to be detained and interrogated for up to 14 days without charge. These measures, supported by the Labor Party, will also include indefinite incarceration of prisoners convicted of terrorism offences, even after they have completed their sentences.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact