

Australian authorities label Melbourne hostage incident a “terrorist” attack

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Assisted by the media, the Australian political establishment has rushed to declare a hostage incident and fatal shooting in Melbourne yesterday afternoon, the details of which remain murky, an act of terrorism.

None of the claims by the government and media about the incident can be accepted at face value. What is known is that 31-year-old Yacqub Khayre, a Somalian-born Australian citizen, fatally shot an unidentified male employee in the foyer of an apartment complex in the suburb of Brighton. Khayre had reportedly checked into the apartment and taken an unidentified woman hostage inside his room.

Khayre reportedly called Channel 7 news at approximately 5.40pm, and declared: “This is for IS [Islamic State] and this is for Al Qaeda.” He was shot and killed approximately 20 minutes later by special operations police forces after an exchange of gunfire outside the building, during which three police received minor injuries.

No evidence has been produced of any contact with terrorist groups, despite Islamic State claiming responsibility for Khayre’s action. His statement supporting both Al Qaeda and Islamic State, two rival organisations, is contradictory.

The Victorian state police declared that Khayre was operating as a “lone wolf”—in other words, that the event was not part of a coordinated plan by any terrorist organisation.

Despite what police called a long record of criminality, Khayre was released from jail on parole last September after serving three years of a five-year sentence. In 2012 he had been convicted of a violent home invasion and armed robbery while high on the methamphetamine ice.

No plausible explanation has been provided for his release. Victorian police commissioner Graham Ashton

said: “Most recently he’s done some prison time in relation to reckless intent to cause injury and whilst in prison was processed as well for arson whilst in the corrections system.”

Once again, it seems, the actions of a mentally unstable individual who was well known to the intelligence agencies are being seized upon to justify the strengthening of the police and intelligence forces and attacks on basic democratic rights.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull called a press conference this morning to declare that the “terrorist attack ... underlines the need for us to be constantly vigilant, never to be deterred, always defiant, in the face of Islamist terrorism.” Turnbull used the incident to defend the ongoing war by Australia, US and allied forces in Iraq and Syria, saying Australian forces were “in the field” fighting IS.

Victorian state Labor Premier Daniel Andrews foreshadowed further increases in police powers and resources. “The [police] chief commissioner has more powers and more resources than has even been the case ... but anything else the chief commissioner needs, he will get it.” The Andrews government previously announced a massive boost to police numbers and recently introduced US-style shooting training tactics for police.

Before any of the facts were known, newspapers featured front-page stories on the incident as part of the effort to whip up an atmosphere of national crisis. The Murdoch-owned *Herald Sun* published a special 1.00 a.m. edition on the “Brighton Siege” with a cover photo of the gunman and the banner, “Face of Terror.”

Khayre was one of five men tried as part of an alleged 2009 terrorist “plot” against the Holsworthy army base in Sydney. During their 2010 trial, it emerged that an undercover police officer, working under the alias

“Hamza,” played a major role in entrapping them. “Hamza” had proposed that the group target the Holsworthy base, and convinced Wissam Fattal to travel to Sydney to observe the base. Fattal’s trip to Sydney was then filmed and used as evidence of a terrorist plot. The agent later admitted that no plot to carry out an attack existed, other than his proposal. (See: “Australia: Jury delivers split verdict in long-running ‘terror’ trial”)

Khayre was acquitted in the case, while Fattal and two other men were convicted and jailed for 18 years. All five, who came from trouble backgrounds of petty crime and involvement with drugs, were kept in solitary confinement for 18 months leading up to the trial.

When he was finally released, Khayre appears to have been a thoroughly damaged young man. The security agencies’ claim that he was a “low-risk person of interest” who was not being closely monitored. In fact, his background made him a prime candidate to be manipulated and used by the intelligence agencies.

A 2009 cable from US intelligence services released by WikiLeaks stated that Australian Federal Police counter-terrorism coordinator Damien Appleby and Victoria Police detective inspector Andrew Gutske characterised Khayre “as a ‘weakling’ who struggled with the harsh day to day life in Somalia ... The AFP believes that Khayre may be turned while in prison to serve as an informant in related cases.”

In December 2014, another hostage incident involving a mentally unstable man with prior connections to the intelligence agencies, Man Haron Monis, at the Lindt café in Sydney, was deliberately elevated to the level of a national terror emergency by government and police agencies. (See: “Australian inquest into Sydney siege whitewashes unanswered questions”)

Similar incidents throughout the bogus “war on terror,” have been used by governments in Australia, the United States, Britain and across Europe to introduce draconian police powers and provide the pretext for predatory wars across the resource-rich Middle East.

The Brighton siege followed statements by the Turnbull government calling for an expansion of powers to monitor the Internet and for greater domestic use of the military in the wake of last weekend’s terror attacks in London.



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