# Police “terror” raids in Australia mask unanswered questions about hostage incident

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In a show of force, more than 150 Victorian state and federal counter-terrorism police raided homes in Melbourne’s northern suburbs before dawn yesterday, and Victoria’s deputy police commissioner Shane Patton foreshadowed more raids in coming days.

The operation was said to relate to the supply of firearms used by Yacqub Khayre, a mentally-ill and drug-addicted young man, when he killed a man and took a hostage in the bayside suburb of Brighton on Monday.

Victoria Police’s para-military Special Operations Group and Australian Federal Police (AFP) counter-terrorism officers searched homes and detained occupants, reportedly seeking evidence for potential charges of aiding and abetting a terrorist offence, a crime that carries life imprisonment.

As intended, the raids generated fresh media headlines about the “terrorist threat,” seeking to drown out an examination of all the unanswered questions about Monday’s event, particularly the revelations that the police had targeted Khayre to become an undercover agent.

As with nearly every terrorist-linked attack internationally, including the latest atrocities in Manchester and London, the perpetrator was well known to the police and intelligence agencies, yet inexplicably “fell through the cracks” of their massive surveillance networks.

Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews rushed to take credit for yesterday’s police raids. “They are in connection with the terrible, tragic events of Monday in Brighton,” he told Sky News as the operation began.

Andrews also stepped up the bipartisan exploitation of the hostage-taking incident. Both his state Labor government and the federal Liberal-National Coalition government have falsely depicted Khayre’s actions as a terrorist attack in order to call for even greater police-state powers.

Andrews advocated more draconian laws, including the expansion of “control orders” and “preventative detention orders”—two forms of detention without trial that were introduced in 2005 on the pretext of responding to an imminent terrorist emergency that never materialised.

These powers were on top of arbitrary detention and interrogation powers handed to the political spy agency, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), in 2002, in the first sweeping batch of measures under the banner of the “war on terror.”

Andrews and other state and territory leaders met Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull yesterday for a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) gathering to further bolster the powers and resources of the security forces.

Turnbull announced a special “terrorism summit” to be convened “as soon as possible” to discuss the proposals of Andrews and others. In the meantime, the COAG leaders agreed to a presumption against parole and bail for people with “terror links.” They also decided that parole and prison officials would be briefed by ASIO on “terror suspects.”

It is not for want of such sweeping powers that Khayre supposedly “slipped through the net.” Among the unanswered questions about Monday’s hostage incident the following are the most critical:

* Why did senior commanders of the AFP and Victoria Police set out to recruit Khayre as an informant?

A secret US diplomatic cable previously published by WikiLeaks demonstrates that in August 2009, AFP counter-terrorism coordinator Damien Appleby and

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Victoria Police detective inspector Andrew Gutske proposed grooming Khayre, who was in prison, as an undercover agent.

In an assessment provided to Michael Thurston, the US consul-general in Melbourne, Appleby and Gutske stated: "The AFP believes that Khayre may be turned while in prison to serve as an informant in related cases."

Such vulnerable recruits are employed to infiltrate groups, often acting as agent provocateurs to entrap others into making statements or taking steps that can then be cited as evidence of plans for "a terrorist act."

That kind of frame-up is known to have taken place in 2009, when Khayre was charged with involvement in an alleged plot to make a far-fetched suicide attack on the Holsworthy army base in Sydney. According to the evidence at the trial, the "plot" was proposed by a police undercover plant.

As a result, three young men were convicted and sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment, but Khayre was found not guilty by the jury. Meanwhile, he had been held in a "super-maximum" security prison between August 2009 and December 2010.

* Why was this briefing given to the US consulate?

The US consul-general relayed the assessment, via a classified cable, to a high-level list of US addresses, including the US embassy in Canberra, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), National Security Council, Secretary of State and Department of Justice.

Consul-general Thurston further stated: "Our contacts within the AFP and the Victoria Police praise intelligence collaboration between Australia and the United States, but request that more cooperation be carried out between countries with large Somali populations such as Sweden, the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom. Specifically, these contacts appreciate roving witness programs with the FBI and would like to see their application expanded. Positive public relations could be an added benefit of this increased collaboration."

This cable points to the intensive collaboration between the US, Australian and allied intelligence agencies, including the use of witness protection programs for undercover agents. It also indicates the key role of "public relations"—that is, media deception—in the operations conducted by the globally coordinated network.

* Did Khayre's police recruitment proceed?

There has been no statement from the AFP or Victoria Police denying that Khayre became an informant. It is entirely possible that he provided information about the supposed Holsworthy conspiracy and may have remained in the grip of the authorities right up to Monday's violent events, in which the police gunned him down, ensuring his silence.

Khayre may have been a participant in a police "de-radicalisation" program—another vehicle for cajoling young men into working with the security agencies, under threat of being returned to jail, prosecuted on new charges or being deported if they fail to cooperate.

Fairfax Media reported that in 2011 the AFP rejected a recommendation for Khayre to participate in such a program. But Victoria Police this week said 22 people were currently enrolled in its "Community Integration Support Program," and Khayre was a participant.

Many other questions remain. They include why Khayre, then 19, was initially released on probation in 2007, with a three-year jail sentence suspended, after being convicted of more than 40 violent offences? Did his probation require collaboration with the police?

Khayre had a traumatic background. He arrived in Australia as a child in 1991, fleeing the conflict in Somalia. All the evidence points to a deeply troubled young man with a long history of "ice" addiction and alcohol abuse, being preyed upon by both Islamic fundamentalists and police-intelligence agencies.

Islamists and Western security agencies internationally have exploited unstable and vulnerable young men. Enraged by the US-led wars that have devastated the Middle East, killing and displacing millions of people, in pursuit of Washington's hegemony over the strategic and resource-rich region, such teenagers and men have become the dispensable cannon fodder of intensifying geo-political conflicts.

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