

New Zealand fascist killer had known Australian far-right links

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Substantial evidence has emerged in recent days that Brenton Tarrant, the 28-year-old Australian who gunned down 50 people in a premeditated attack on two mosques in New Zealand on March 15, had intensive links with far-right groups in Australia.

Despite claims by governments and state agencies that Tarrant was a “lone wolf” whose murderous plans could not have been detected, he had personal connections with a fascistic network in Australia, as well as across Europe and the US, to which he paid tribute in his manifesto.

During a 10-month period in 2016–17, Tarrant made more than 30 comments on the then publicly-available Facebook pages of two Australian far-right groups, the United Patriots Front (UPF) and the True Blue Crew, both notorious for inciting hostility toward Muslims and other immigrants.

Tarrant’s comments agitated for physical attacks on “communists,” “globalists” and Marxists,” as well as Muslims. In one post, he hailed a 2016 UPF attack on counter-protesters in Melbourne. “Communists will get what communists get, I would love to be there holding one end of the rope when you get yours traitor,” he declared.

Although these Facebook pages were later shut down, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s (ABC) “Background Briefing” program obtained an archive of the material. During the period in which Tarrant posted his comments, the UPF was prominently featured in the media and the state agencies would have been fully aware of its Facebook activity.

In another post, celebrating Trump’s victory in the 2016 US presidential election, Tarrant hailed UPF leader Blair Cottrell, a much-publicised far-right nationalist, as an “Emperor.” Cottrell had welcomed Trump’s election as the end to “political correctness”

and “Marxism” in the US.

Tarrant agreed, commenting: “Simply one of the most important events in modern history.” He added: “Globalists and Marxists on suicide watch, patriots and nationalists triumphant—looking forward to Emperor Blair Cottrell coming soon.”

Months earlier, Tarrant had been ecstatic when Cottrell was broadcast on national television, making an appearance that effectively promoted his fascistic activities, which included a mock beheading of a pig to protest against a planned mosque.

In a personal message to Cottrell, Tarrant wrote: “Knocked it out of the park tonight Blair. Your retorts had me smiling, nodding, cheering and often laughing. Never believed we would have a true leader of the nationalist movement in Australia, and especially not so early in the game.”

There is no doubt that the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), the political surveillance agency, would have followed these exchanges. A government security consultant and former Australian diplomat, Neil Fergus, told the ABC that ASIO has been closely monitoring far-right groups for some time. It was “extremely active in this area.”

Almost certainly, ASIO has undercover agents or informants inside these networks. John Coyne, a researcher with the federal government-funded Australian Strategic Policy Institute, told the *Australian* that he began his career in the Australian Federal Police (AFP). One of his first assignments was to infiltrate far-right groups, which he described as “a very small cadre” of “hardcore right-wing extremists and white supremacists.”

A highly-connected former US State Department security consultant, Australian-born David Kilcullen, this week told another ABC program, “Four Corners,”

that a number of far-right groups in Australia were “well known to the police and the security services” for “training in the bush, carrying out leafleting and graffiti activities and generally trying to raise awareness around white supremacists, or neo-Nazi ideology.”

“Four Corners” reported that Tarrant participated in Neo-Nazi forums that encourage and celebrate violent attacks on an internet message board called *8chan*. The state agencies would have been well aware of this platform. ASIO and the other Australian intelligence forces are part of a US-led global surveillance web, referred to as the “Five Eyes.” As documented by WikiLeaks, Julian Assange and Edward Snowden, the network intercepts and analyses the telecommunications of millions of people worldwide.

“Four Corners” provided further evidence that Tarrant’s atrocity could have been prevented. On March 13—two days before the massacre—he flooded Facebook with posts on extreme right-wing themes and posted photos on twitter of guns and magazines covered with symbols of fascist ideology.

At midday on the day of the attack, he posted links to his manifesto on Facebook, and at 1:28 p.m.—12 minutes before he began shooting—he announced on *8chan* “an attack against the invaders” and provided a link to his Facebook livestream. On his way to the Christchurch mosques, his GPS coordinates could even be heard on the livestream feed.

“Four Corners,” echoing the response of the Australian political and “security” establishment, concluded that Tarrant simply “flew under the radar” of the intelligence agencies. But the mounting evidence indicates that the state agencies either turned a blind eye to the violent activities and plans of Tarrant and other fascists, or wilfully ignored them.

Certainly there are close relations between the far-right groups and state agencies across Europe. In his manifesto, Tarrant boasted that fascist groups are deeply integrated into the state apparatus, the military and the police. He estimated that “hundreds of thousands” of European soldiers and police belong to “nationalist groups.”

On “Background Briefing,” Tarrant’s hero, Cottrell, baldly denied any personal knowledge of Tarrant. “I didn’t know who he was,” he said. “And you won’t find any evidence to the contrary.” However, he acknowledged that someone in the UPF could have met

Tarrant, and admitted that Tarrant had made a donation to the UPF.

Cottrell is currently associated with a new far-right outfit, the Lads Society, which is trying to publicly distance itself from the massacre. In a statement last week, the organisation condemned “politically motivated violence” and said Tarrant “did not belong to any group and that he acted alone.” The documented record exposes this lie. It is likely Tarrant acted with the knowledge and support of at least elements of the fascist network.

Nevertheless, cosy relations continue between the Lads Society and the state agencies. The group’s statement said it met with officers from ASIO and state police services about the Christchurch events, indicating they regard such far-right outfits as legitimate partners.

Like the Lads Society, politicians, including Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Labor Party leader Bill Shorten, have made hypocritical statements condemning racist violence. In reality, the political and media establishment has demonised Muslim refugees, alongside Chinese immigrants, as a threat, and blamed immigration for every social problem. They bear political responsibility for the political evolution of Tarrant, born in 1991, who grew up for his entire life in this reactionary political climate.



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