

Australian police claim far-right shootout in Queensland was not terrorism

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In a media conference yesterday, Queensland Deputy Police Commissioner Tracy Linford declared that a shootout in the regional area of Wieambilla that left six people dead on December 12 was not being deemed an act of terror.

That assertion can only be described as extraordinary, not least because the incident included the murder of two police officers, which Queensland Police and the media have exploited to try and drum up support for the cops.

More fundamentally, though, the political motivations of the alleged perpetrators, Nathaniel, Gareth and Stacey Train, have become crystal clear. They were deeply involved in an extreme right-wing milieu that has been particularly preoccupied with opposition to COVID-19 vaccinations and other public health measures.

The statements of the police themselves, moreover, have indicated the calculated character of the shootout. Police sources have told the media they were investigating whether the Trains lured the police to the isolated rural property. The outdoor area of the property allegedly included motion sensors and other technology that enabled the Trains to direct the officers into “kill zones.”

As soon as they arrived at the property, the four police officers were allegedly met by gunfire from the Trains, who were already decked out in military-style fatigues and ready with high-powered weaponry. Police statements have indicated that a substantial arsenal was later found in the house.

The shootout left two police dead, another injured with gunshot wounds and a fourth lucky to be alive after the Trains tried to smoke her out of bushland by starting a fire. A neighbor who came to investigate was also murdered by the trio. They were themselves killed later that night in a shootout with tactical police officers.

Linford’s statements were full of contradictions. She said: “What we can see is sentiment displayed by the three individuals, the three Train family members, that appears anti-government, anti-police, conspiracy theorist-type things.”

Linford added that police were investigating whether the Trains’ actions constituted “religiously-motivated extremism” and “pathological-fuelled violence.” Counter-terrorism police were involved in those inquiries.

But, despite all of this, Linford blandly stated that “We are

certainly not classing it as a domestic terror event. At this point there’s nothing really to indicate that.”

The sole basis for this assertion was the fact that “we can’t see them connected to any particular group that they might have been working with or inspired them to do anything.”

The obvious refutation of that contention is that in almost any conceivable context, three people, i.e., the Trains themselves, constitute a group. These individuals, moreover, lived together in a fortified compound-like dwelling, shared the same right-wing extremist views and sought to develop a public political presence through a YouTube channel that expounded their hostility to COVID safety measures, animosity to the police and a distinctive brand of apocalyptic Protestant Christianity.

Their connections to other right-wing extremists are also a matter of public record. The last video uploaded to the YouTube channel was on the evening of December 12, after the Trains had murdered the two police but before the final shootout with tactical officers. In what was essentially their last testament, a video spanning just 41 seconds, the Trains gave a warm message to a man they called “Don,” telling him, “We’ll see you when we get home, Don.”

The *Guardian* reported on December 16, almost a week before Linford’s press conference, that “Don” appeared to be a US-based conspiracy theorist. According to the *Guardian*, a post by Gareth Train that included a reference to Don in the period prior to the shootout had stated: “My brother and I have been out-numbered by the wicked and ask our father to set fire to the cities and towns and call out to our Brother Yeshua to return.” Other posts also anticipated the violence that the Trains were planning to unleash.

After the attack, “Don” posted his own video, describing the Trains as martyrs and saying that their actions refuted those who claimed that it was impossible to take on “Goliath” and the “Luciferians.”

All of the Trains’ videos have been removed from social media. It appears that “Don’s” have been as well. That includes on BitChute, a “free speech” video service that frequently hosts content that would be removed from other platforms. Users who click on the Trains’ videos on BitChute are instructed that they have been removed “at the request of authorities.”

As some terrorism experts have noted, the apparent determination of Queensland Police to dissociate the shootout from terrorism contrasts sharply with the approach of the authorities over the past twenty years to violent incidents involving Muslims.

Under the rubric of the “war on terror,” one murky incident after another has been deemed a “terrorist attack.” This has never been contingent on the accused having concrete ties to a proscribed organisation. It has included cases involving mentally disturbed individuals and teenage boys.

Queensland Police and Ms. Linford herself provided a recent example. In December 2020, Raghe Mohamed Abdi, a 22-year-old Somalian immigrant, killed his two elderly neighbours. He was then shot dead by police while waving a knife around on a busy highway. The day after the incident, Linford declared that it was “pretty clear that we need to treat this as a terrorism event.”

Abdi, it later emerged, was profoundly unwell, suffering from untreated schizophrenia. There was no evidence that he had connections with extremists, and there was nothing about his crime, the killing of two people close to 90 years of age, that indicated a political motive.

In her press conference yesterday, Linford dropped what can only be described as a bombshell. For a full week-and-a-half, Queensland Police had asserted that officers were sent to the Wieambilla property to perform a “welfare check” on Nathaniel Train because he had been reported missing in the neighboring state of New South Wales (NSW).

Linford revealed on Thursday, though, that Queensland police in fact had an arrest warrant for Nathaniel Train. In December, 2021, he had attempted to illegally enter Queensland through its border with NSW, to bypass a requirement that those coming into the state had been vaccinated.

Train had attempted to ram the border gate with his SUV. When that failed, he reportedly used bolt-cutters on the gate. At the time, the area was hit by floodwaters. A witness reported seeing Train dumping material into the waters and leaving his car behind, where it remained until at least last week. When the witness looked at the dumped items, they included weaponry. The incident was widely known in the area and police were notified.

In other words, far from being “under the radar,” as police have claimed since the shootout, Nathaniel Train was known to have engaged in illegal arms trafficking across their state border. Linford, it appears, only made the admission because the story of the border incident had been reported by the media in the days before her press conference.

The revelation raises a host of questions: what attempts were made to apprehend Nathaniel Train in the year between the border incursion and the shootout? Where was he over those 12 months? And why were four inexperienced young police sent to an isolated rural compound to check on a man accused of

serious firearms offences?

The inescapable conclusion is that sections of the state, including, first and foremost, the Queensland Police, took a hands-off approach to the Trains. Also implicated, however, are the NSW Police.

Illegal arms trafficking by a right-wing extremist would come under the purview of the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the domestic spy agency. Both have acknowledged in recent years that right-wing extremists account for an ever greater percentage of terrorism investigations.

There have also been strange happenings in Wieambilla. This week, a suspicious fire threatened the Trains’ property before being brought under control.

The Queensland Police Union has declared its intention to buy the property. Its president, Ian Leavers, told the media that this was primarily to prevent it from becoming a haven for “anti-vaxxers, pro-gun, conspiracy theorists,” a statement further undermining claims that the Trains did not engage in politically motivated terrorism.

But Leavers also said the site “could be used as a retreat for police who are doing it tough as well as it could be used for training purposes.” No explanation was given as to why police would engage in training, let alone mental health retreats, at a site where two of their colleagues were brutally murdered.

Almost two weeks after the shooting, the contents of the Trains’ house have not been publicly revealed by the police. The inevitable question is whether there is material in or around the house that would contradict the official narrative of “lone wolf” individuals with no connection to a broader terrorist conspiracy.

The far-right forces that the Trains represented have been actively encouraged by sections of the media and political establishment. Their small anti-lockdown protests were used as a battering ram against successful public health measures, which enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of working people.

In December 2021, the very same month that Train was able to illegally cross the Queensland border without hindrance, the country’s governments were abandoning COVID mitigation measures and letting the virus rip in the interests of corporate profit. In doing so, they, including then-Prime Minister Scott Morrison, favorably invoked the anti-lockdown and anti-vaccine demonstrations carried out by the Trains’ cothinkers.



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