

Murky Australian “foreign interference” arrest used to promote war against Russia

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With much media fanfare, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) announced last Thursday that a 27-year-old Australian-Russian dual citizen had been arrested on charges of attempting to engage in intentional foreign interference, which carries a maximum penalty of 20 years’ imprisonment.

The next day, Vladimir Teslov was remanded in custody by a Brisbane magistrate on accusations that he tried to collect and communicate information relating to Ukrainian military personnel, locations and operations to people “he believed” were connected to Russian intelligence services.

Lawyers for the young man, who did not appear in court, made no application for bail. Teslov could remain in prison until his case is next heard on October 2. To further promote media attention, the AFP yesterday posted a video of his arrest.

Every aspect of this case remains murky. But from what is known, it shows how far Australia’s foreign interference laws can go to criminalise any political activity accused of being for the benefit of a foreign government or organisation.

A joint AFP media release with the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), the domestic spy and surveillance agency, alleged that Teslov travelled to Russia in October, 2024 and undertook military-style training.

No details were provided of this training, which must have been brief: “After returning to Australia in December, 2024, it is alleged he maintained contact with individuals he believed were connected to Russian intelligence services.”

The AFP and ASIO allege that Teslov travelled to Ukraine in May 2025, “where he joined the Ukrainian Armed Forces and gained access to information relating to their military personnel, units and locations” and

later “provided, or attempted to provide,” information to such unnamed individuals.

When first introduced in 2018 by the previous Liberal-National Coalition government with Labor’s backing, the foreign interference laws were justified by the political and media establishment as needed to protect Australians and “national security” from interference by foreign powers.

Teslov’s arrest confirms that the laws have an even wider scope to outlaw any association with an overseas government or organisation, regardless of any supposed “interference” in Australia itself.

From what the AFP itself reported, there has been no danger in this case to Australian people or even government or corporate interests, just allegedly to those of the fascistic Ukrainian regime headed by Volodymyr Zelensky, which is fronting an escalating US-NATO war against Russia.

At a media conference on Friday, AFP Commissioner Krissy Barrett stressed there was no threat to Australia. Instead, she declared that the arrest was essential to “send a message” that Australia would not be a “safe haven” for people “acting on behalf of foreign principals who do not share our values.”

Barrett refused to answer a journalist’s question about whether Teslov would have been charged if he were accused of supplying Ukraine with Russian information. She also declined to comment on whether Ukrainian authorities had prompted what the AFP described as an “extensive” investigation by ASIO.

Barrett refused to explain what the AFP meant when it said Teslov “believed” he was providing information to Russian intelligence. From this formulation, it appears this could be another case of entrapment by the AFP, ASIO and their international partners in the US and Europe.

Entrapment occurs when undercover police or intelligence agents entice, persuade or provoke someone into speaking about or preparing to carry out certain behaviour, such as travelling to a war zone or trying to provide information to another country.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has documented, AFP and ASIO entrapment has been the basis for multiple terrorism cases in Australia, including some where the prosecutions failed after the entrapment was exposed. Entrapment has become endemic in Australia and internationally, creating sensational scare campaigns that are used to justify an increasing assault on basic legal and democratic rights.

The WSWS has also warned that the foreign interference offences, now in section 92.2 of the federal Criminal Code, outlaw any allegedly covert conduct “on behalf of, or in collaboration with, a foreign principal.”

“Collaboration” is undefined. It could cover consultation, information-sharing, coordination, or even online communication. “Foreign principal” is defined to cover not just governments and government agencies, but also “foreign political organisations” and “foreign political parties.”

Thus, campaigning against Australian supply of arms or involvement in Ukraine, Gaza or other US-backed military interventions could be criminalised if any contact were made, even by widely-used encrypted text or email platforms, with any overseas organisation.

The legislation also expanded previously existing offences, such as treason, sabotage, advocating mutiny and breaching official secrecy, broadening their potential use to criminalise anti-war advocacy, including the exposure of war crimes.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese’s Labor government is preparing to further expand the foreign interference laws, because only two convictions (both dubious) have been obtained under them so far. Five other unclear prosecutions against Chinese or Russian nationals are underway.

The Labor government is continuing Australia’s record as one of the biggest non-NATO contributors of military equipment and funding to the war against Russia, now totalling \$1.7 billion. This is part of Labor’s integration of Australia into a developing US-led global war, including access to bases in Australia and participation in the genocide against the

Palestinians, the illegal assault on Iran, and a vast military build-up in the Indo-Pacific targeting China.

Ukraine’s ambassador to Australia, Vasyl Myroshnychenko, quickly welcomed the news of Teslov’s arrest. He declared that it was not surprising because Russian President Vladimir Putin had criticised the AUKUS alliance—a military pact for war against China—and was therefore identifying Australia as an enemy of Russia in the Indo-Pacific.

The Russian embassy in Canberra said it had learned of Teslov’s case as a result of media reports and had received no notifications of the allegations by Australian authorities. Yet the accusations have been splashed all over the media, amounting to war propaganda.

By contrast, the major media outlets in Australia, as in the United States and Europe, have maintained a deliberate blackout of coverage of a Ukrainian court’s August 10 imposition of a 15-year prison term on Bogdan Syrotyuk, a 27-year-old Ukrainian socialist, despite growing international calls for his release.

Bogdan was convicted of high treason for writing six WSWS articles urging Russian and Ukrainian workers to make common cause against the war, opposing both Putin’s invasion and Washington’s proxy war, and denouncing the Zelensky regime’s official glorification of World War II Ukrainian Nazi collaborators.

We urge our readers to sign the petition demanding Bogdan’s release at wsws.org/freebogdan. Send letters to the Pervomaisk City District Court (inbox@pm.mk.court.gov.ua) and the Mykolaiv Court of Appeal (inbox@mka.court.gov.ua), copied to freebogdan@wsws.org, calling on them to vacate the 15-year sentence and free Bogdan.



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