

SE News
HD **Timor spy saga will get messy**
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WHAT'S with all these spying scandals?

First Indonesia and now East Timor have been the target of our spooks. It seems we like to bug the conversations of our neighbours. The US has also had some embarrassing moments in recent months, apologising to its allies in Europe for spying on them.

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The disclosures, mostly made by former intelligence officers, have fuelled debates over surveillance and the balance between protecting our national security and the release of sensitive information.

That the surveillance occurs is probably expected and accepted by the public as a necessary evil.

It is an awkward truth that nobody trusts anybody in matters of state. The national interest must be protected, and so everybody watches everybody. But what if it involves the private interests of our companies and politicians, and the line blurs between national and commercial interest?

China is said to have an army of spies in commercial espionage. The East Timorese are claiming Australia gained a commercial advantage in gas treaty negotiations by bugging the offices of its prime minister in 2004.

Compensation worth **billions** of dollars and access to **oil** and gas deposits in the Timor Sea were at **stake**, and East Timor now has petitioned the International Court of Justice in The Hague to revoke the gas treaty with Australia.

The former ASIS officer who provided information to the East Timorese is claimed to have been motivated by a sense of betrayal over the interference of commercial interests.

There is also concern former foreign minister Alexander Downer later became a lobbyist for the Australian **oil** and gas **company** Woodside, which held an interest in the Timor Sea gas fields.

Last month ASIO raided the Canberra office of the lawyer who is representing East Timor, seizing documents, while the former ASIS officer who provided the information has been detained. It appears the whole sorry saga will now play out in public hearings.

NS gspy : Espionage | gcat : Political/General News | gcns : National Security | gdef : Armed Forces
RE timor : Timor-Leste | austr : Australia | apacz : Asia Pacific | asiaz : Asia | ausnz : Australia/Oceania | dvpcoz : Developing Economies | seasia : Southeast Asia
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