

NSW Coroner: Balibo five murdered in cold blood

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international / injustice/law / commentary

The NSW Coroner has found, in relation to the Balibo five, as follows:

FINDING - SECTION 22(1) CORONERS ACT 1980.

“Brian Raymond Peters, in the company of fellow journalists Gary James Cunningham, Malcolm Harvie Rennie, Gregory John Shackleton and Anthony John Stewart, collectively known as “the Balibo Five”, died at Balibo in Timor- Leste on 16 October 1975 from wounds sustained when he was shot and/or stabbed deliberately, and not in the heat of battle, by members of the Indonesian Special Forces, including Christoforus da Silva and Captain Yunus Yosfiah on the orders of Captain Yosfiah, to prevent him from revealing that Indonesian Special Forces had participated in the attack on Balibo. There is strong circumstantial evidence that those orders emanated from the Head of the Indonesian Special Forces, Major-General Benny Murdani to Colonel Dading Kalbuadi, Special Forces Group Commander in Timor, and then to Captain Yosfiah.”



'Balibo five'

The Balibo five case vividly highlights Australian cowardice, lack of identity and the deplorable attitude government displays toward its citizens - which other nation would tolerate its citizens being slaughtered in cold blood by murderous, barbaric forces. Australian military surveillance intercepted communications of these murders at the time but our 'brave' politicians were unable to deal effectively with a most heinous crime and affront to the character and 'integrity' of the nation.

Successive cowardly governments hoped the scandal would fade into the background with time but thanks to a few brave individuals, the injustices of that day in 1975 remained in the public arena until the truth could no longer be avoided. A NSW government official finally 'found' what has been open knowledge for decades - the Balibo five were murdered in cold blood by Indonesian forces.

Before I proceed I would cite an eye witness account of the murders taken from a documentary of

the events. After identifying themselves as Australian civilians the five journalists surrendered to Indonesian forces, they were then mustered into an deserted house and shot in cold blood. The last human voice the Balibo five heard before they were murdered was that of then Captain Yunus Yosfiah, ordering his reluctant troops to open fire on the unarmed Australians; the command he gave at the time in Bahasa was, "ngak usah pikir, tembak aja," which translates as, 'don't think, just shoot!'

Every successive government since the Whitlam Labor government is guilty of sweeping this issue under the carpet. It was hoped various feeble attempts at cover-ups would lay the issue to rest but the concerted and relentless efforts of a few brave investigators and female family members led the push for justice; today finally saw their efforts rewarded. Perhaps now the spirits of slain innocents can rest a little easier -- but it's not over by a long shot.

Every event must be appreciated in the period/context in which it transpired if underlying factors are to be understood and the Truth revealed. The parallels with today's 'war on terror,' illegal Iraq invasion, wholesale murder and oil plunder is uncanny.

The American CIA and British interests desired to eliminate the popular, legitimate, nationalist leader, Sukarno -- who had succeeded in freeing Indonesia from the yoke of Dutch colonialism. Sukarno resisted the attempts of American and British interests to enslave his nation a second time.

Employing methods now familiar to all historians, Western interests planned to subvert the legitimate government and replace it with a compliant dictatorship. The ambitious and shrewd General Suharto, supported by the West with arms and millions in funds, falsely accused Sukarno of crimes, confined the popular leader to his home province - under threat of death if he resisted -- and stole government.

Now funded and supported by Western powers, Suharto embarked on a campaign of terror designed to eliminate all his enemies and make the economically powerful Chinese business class subservient to him. General Suharto's military in a few short years murdered three million ethnic Chinese and millions of other citizens faithful to the former leader. America and Britain applauded General Suharto's 'anti-communist campaigns' and continued to supply military assistance and millions in funds in exchange for western corporations being given a 'free hand' to exploit the natural resources of the Indonesian Archipelago. An extremely familiar scenario utilised extensively in Latin America, Africa and other undeveloped regions.

The former Portuguese colony of East Timor came into focus after extensive oil and gas reserves were discovered in the Timor Straits. Various Timorese independence movements began vying for power; however, Indonesia and its close neighbour Australia had other ideas.

The ruthless Indonesian military, hardened by years of sanctioned slaughter, moved into Timor to take control. Unfortunately for Suharto and vested interests, the ruthless methods of the Indonesian military had attracted international attention. Overt methods were substituted with covert military operations, which included controlled militias and the usual murder campaigns by special Indonesian forces (murder squads) disguised as locals. Those opposed to an Indonesian takeover were targeted for neutralisation or eradication.

It was at this time that five Australian journalists set out to record and expose the murderous campaigns and slaughter occurring under the nose of the Australian government and the international community. It proved to be a very foolish endeavour; the journos mistakenly believed their status as Australian citizens and journalists would protect them against the barbaric

Indonesians. If previous form or a track record mean anything the journalists should have known they were not immune from the violence of cold-blooded, hardened killers. They failed to make adequate provision for a safe exit in the event of impending danger or to take an opportunity to leave when danger threatened. Nevertheless, in no way does the misguided and idealistic behaviour of civilians justify their cold-blooded murder by military forces.

The Whitlam Labor government, probably using the murders of the Balibo five as leverage, struck a deal with the Indonesians to share the oil and gas reserves of the now Indonesian controlled East Timor - the Timor Gap 'Treaty' was signed! And so began the shameless complicity of successive Australian governments in hiding the truth of the deaths of the Balibo five from the public.

The criminal relationship with the Indonesians became so intimate the Keating government established a casino on Christmas Island (Oz Territory) for the express purpose of laundering hundreds of millions of ill gotten dollars. 'Gambling junkets' were established for the Indonesian criminal elite who arrived with suitcases crammed with illegal dollars made legal as gambling 'winnings' in Australia, a respected western nation!

The interested reader is at liberty to investigate every aspect of this case as today's (very late) finding may only amount to an appeasement in the face of mounting pressure to reveal why successive Australian governments chose not to pursue justice in relation to the cold-blooded murder of the Balibo five.

Nevertheless, in no way should persistent investigation into the sordid Balibo affair prevent the immediate arrest of John Howard, Alexander Downer and Philip Ruddock for war crimes and other crimes against humanity for their complicity in the Iraq holocaust today.

 [Coroner's full report](#)

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2007/11/16/1194766918197.html>

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-786.html>