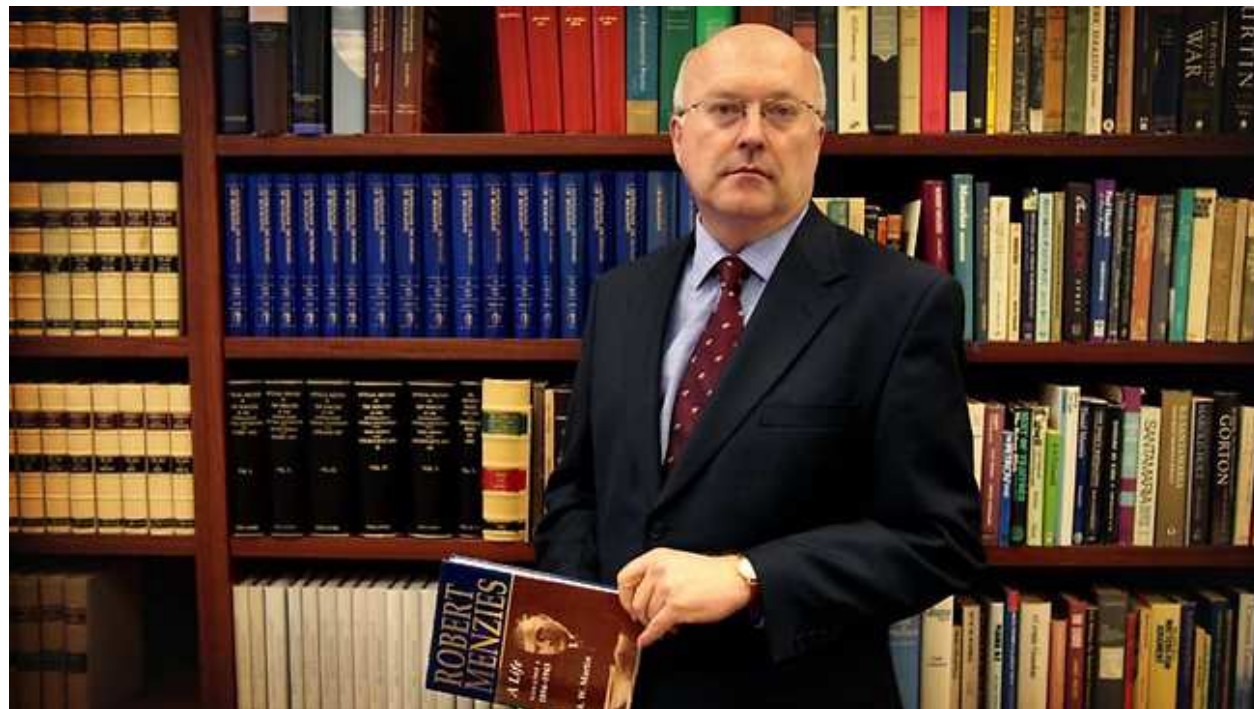


## THE AUSTRALIAN

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# Attorney-General George Brandis says raids on lawyer, spy were above board

BEN PACKHAM THE AUSTRALIAN DECEMBER 04, 2013 3:28PM



Senator George Brandis told the senate today that raids on a lawyer and a former spy were not conducted "to somehow impede or subvert" a legal claim over alleged spying on East Timor by Australian security agencies. Picture: Ray Strange. Source: TheAustralian

### **ATTORNEY-General George Brandis says raids on a lawyer and a former spy were not aimed at interfering in a legal claim over alleged spying on East Timor by Australian security agencies.**

Senator Brandis made a statement to the senate today on last night's raids on lawyer Bernard Collaery and a former Australian Secret Intelligence Service officer.

Mr Collaery is representing East Timor in an arbitration hearing in the Hague, while the former ASIS officer is his star witness.

It's alleged Australian spies bugged the cabinet room of East Timor in 2004 to help Woodside Petroleum in oil and gas negotiations.

Senator Brandis said he signed the ASIO warrants authorising the raids, in which documents and electronic data were seized relating to "security matters".

"On the basis of the intelligence put before me by ASIO, I was satisfied that the documents and electronic media identified did satisfy the statutory tests, and therefore I issued the warrants," he told the Senate.

**RAIDS: Shorten demands answers** (<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/policy/bill-shorten-demands-answers-on-timor-spying-raids/story-fn59nm2j-1226774863734>)

**LAWYER: Spies swoop on office** (<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/policy/spies-swoop->

[on-canberra-office/story-fn59nm2j-1226774573512](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/politics-news/at.../on-canberra-office/story-fn59nm2j-1226774573512))

Mr Collaery said Australia's domestic spy agency sent between 15 and 20 officers to raid his Canberra law practice, and had cancelled the passport of his star witness - a former Australian spy turned whistleblower - making it impossible for him to give evidence in East Timor's case against Australia.

But Senator Brandis said claims by Mr Collaery and Jesuit father Frank Brennan that the warrants were issued "to somehow impede or subvert the arbitration" were wrong.

"The search warrants were issued, on the advice and at the request of ASIO, to protect Australia's national security," he said.

"I do not know what particular material was identified from the documents and electronic media taken into possession in the execution of the warrants. That will be a matter for ASIO to analyse in coming days."

He said he had instructed ASIO to ensure the material gained through the warrants was not given to those running Australia's case in the Hague.

Senator Brandis confirmed the opposition had today been briefed on the ASIO raids.

Earlier, Greens MP Adam Bandt said he was concerned the nation's top law officer had been "using his powers to interfere with a lawyer and a witness in a court case that's going on".

"If it is true, it seems that George Brandis seems to think he's J. Edgar Hoover and is able to throw warrants around like confetti," Mr Bandt said.

Labor's Kelvin Thomson said he was also concerned about the matter.

"If the Attorney-General decides to raid your home, or someone else's, and just says it's about national security, that doesn't make it so," he said.

"I think the Attorney-General owes the people of Australia an explanation."

As reported in the Australian in May, it is alleged the Australian Secret Intelligence Service bugged the East Timorese government offices in Dili during the 2004 negotiations on the Greater Sunrise gas fields.

Mr Collaery told the ABC: "The director-general of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service and his deputy instructed a team of ASIS technicians to travel to East Timor in an elaborate plan, using Australian aid programs relating to the renovation and construction of the cabinet offices in Dili, East Timor, to insert listening devices into the wall, of walls to be constructed under an Australian aid program."

East Timor alleges ASIS breached international law and Timorese sovereignty under a "criminal conspiracy hatched in Canberra".

It claims the operation took place under the control of former foreign affairs minister Alexander Downer.

Mr Collaery likened ASIS's alleged conduct to "insider trading".

"If this had happened in Bridge Street, Collins Street, Wall Street, people would go to jail," he said.

He accused the government and ASIO of "muzzling" the prime witness in the case.