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East Timor spying case cost Australia \$1 million



East Timor delegation from right: Joachim de Fonseca, Stephen Webb, Michael Wood and Janet Legrand, prior to the start of public hearings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, Netherlands, Monday, March 3, 2014. (AAP)

Australian taxpayers paid \$1 million to fight litigation at the International Court of Justice brought by East Timor over a December 2013 ASIO raid.

Source:

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Australia spent \$1 million fighting litigation brought by East Timor over an ASIO raid linked to a dispute over \$40 billion of oil and gas reserves.

The December 2013 raid on the offices of the Australian lawyer acting for East Timor, Bernard Collaery, in which documents and electronic data were seized, was authorised by Attorney-General George Brandis.

A response to questions put to the Attorney-General's Department in a Senate hearing last year, released on Tuesday, reveals the total cost of the litigation to Australian taxpayers was \$1,007,680.

The bill included air fares for three lawyers and eight public servants at a cost of \$87,000, as well as \$16,500 in meals and incidentals.

The solicitor-general flew first class to The Hague, while the rest of the party flew business class.

The International Court of Justice, in a decision announced in March 2014, ordered Australia to cease spying on East Timor, and to seal any documents and data seized in the ASIO raid.

It had been alleged that Australia eavesdropped on East Timor during negotiations on a treaty related to gas reserves in the Timor Sea.