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How many of the **1500** asylum seeker lives lost at sea since 2001 could have been saved?



## Did Australia Have a Man On The Inside In The Organisation That Embarked SIEVX?

by Marg Hutton  
19 November 2011

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The trial and recent failed appeal of convicted people smuggler Hadi Ahmadi revealed a wealth of information about the Australian Federal Police (AFP) network of informers operating in Indonesia during the time of the sinking of SIEVX in October 2001.

Hadi Ahmadi was the first people smuggler to be extradited to Australia from Indonesia. Mr Ahmadi was extradited here in May 2009 before people smuggling had been outlawed in Indonesia. This fact alone raises a serious SIEVX related question - Why is it that [Abu Quassey](#), the principal organiser of the fatal SIEVX voyage in which 353 asylum seekers lost their lives could not be extradited to Australia from Indonesia and yet Hadi Ahmadi could be? Abu Quassey instead was deported to Egypt from Indonesia in 2003 and tried in a court where no witnesses were called. Evidence was provided by Australia 'in [five large blue folders](#)' which were read and deliberated on by the judge - that is, not tested by cross examination.

Hadi Ahmadi and Abu Quassey appear to be significantly connected. In November 2001, just a few weeks after the SIEVX sinking Mr Ahmadi was arrested in Indonesia where it was [alleged](#) by Indonesian Deputy Head of Police Public Relations, Brigadier General Edward Aritonang that he was a [member](#) of Abu Quassey's people smuggling syndicate.

Also, both Hadi Ahmadi and Abu Quassey operated the Christmas Island people smuggling route and were [both charged](#) with organising the same vessel, the boat codenamed 'Yambuk' which arrived at Christmas Island on 4 August 2001, just ten weeks before the SIEVX disaster. It should be pointed out however that Mr Ahmadi was not convicted of any offence in relation to the 'Yambuk'.

The Christmas Island route was less popular than the Ashmore Reef route. During 2001, prior to the SIEVX sinking there were [only 11](#) people smuggling boats that arrived at Christmas Island. So the two smugglers were part of a very small group.

During the trial of Hadi Ahmadi in Perth in 2010 it became clear that the people smuggling syndicate that Hadi Ahmadi was involved in had been penetrated by a double agent who allegedly acted as a people smuggler but who was in fact an AFP informant. This man, Waleed Sultani, gave evidence that he worked with Hadi Ahmadi in 2000 and 2001. Sultani, a former Iraqi soldier, [approached Australian officials in August 2000](#) and offered his services. From then on he [regularly reported](#) to the Australian embassy in Jakarta on people smuggling activities'. According to the [Australian](#), 'he passed on information about the movement of boats, passengers and phone numbers of smugglers to an embassy official called Mr Lee.' Could this refer to Leigh Dixon, the chief liaison officer at the embassy during that period? In 2002 Sultani was assisted to come to Australia by the AFP on a 'justice visa' and had his accommodation paid for until 2005 by the agency. After giving evidence in the trial of another convicted people smuggler, [Hasan Ayoub](#), who also operated the less popular Christmas Island route, he received \$250,000 from Australian officials 'Australian citizenship and [indemnity from prosecution](#)'.

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So we have evidence that Hadi Ahmadi and Abu Quassey were connected - they both operated the Christmas Island route; Indonesian police declared them to be part of the same syndicate and they were both charged with organising the 'Yambuk' voyage. And there is also evidence that the alleged double agent/AFP informant Waleed Sultani and Hadi Ahmadi were connected - they worked together in the people smuggling business in 2000-2001.

This begs the question - were Abu Quassey and Waleed Sultani connected?

In his informant capacity, did Waleed Sultani monitor Abu Quassey's activities? Was he involved in any way in the organisation of SIEVX? Did he sight the boat? Did Waleed Sultani report to the AFP officials in the Australian embassy about Abu Quassey and/or the organisation of SIEVX? If so, precisely what information was passed on and when? Did Australian authorities have more information about the departure of SIEVX than has been acknowledged to date?

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## 250,000 Questions

by Marg Hutton  
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The one off payment of a quarter of a million dollars made in 2005 to a man allegedly working inside people smuggling syndicates in Indonesia but also acting as an informant for the Australian Federal Police (AFP) at the time SIEV X sank (October 2001) is deeply troubling and raises many questions.

According to [Debbie Guest](#), writing in the Australian last year, the man - lets call him 'Mr S' - approached AFP agents based in our embassy in Jakarta in August 2000 and offered his services as an informant after losing \$2,000 to another smuggler who failed to bring him to Australia. For more than 16 months Mr S regularly reported to the embassy and provided information which included smugglers phone numbers, boat movements and passenger numbers while at the same time continuing to work as an assistant to various smugglers operating the Christmas Island smuggling route.

Mr S did not receive payment while working as an informant in Indonesia - this would come later. In 2002 he was assisted by the AFP to come to Australia on a criminal justice visa which did not permit him to work or permanently reside here.

In 2004 Mr S testified as a prosecution witness in the people smuggling [trials of Ali Al Jenabi and Hasan Ayoub](#) who were both convicted and sentenced to lengthy jail terms. According to [Debbie Guest](#) writing on the 2010 people smuggling trial of Hadi Ahmadi in which Mr S also testified as a witness, the AFP informant had received a payment of \$250,000 in 2005 just months after providing evidence in the 2004 Al Jenabi and Ayoub trials. Mr S also reportedly received Australian citizenship and [indemnity from prosecution](#) as rewards for his work with the AFP as well as free accomodation from 2002 - 2005.

The dark shadow of the stricken vessel SIEV X, in which 353 asylum seekers lost their lives looms large over this reported history of Mr S. There are good reasons to think that Mr S was connected to the notorious people smuggler [Abu Quassey](#), who organised the tragic SIEV X voyage. Mr S had infiltrated the smuggling networks of Hasan Ayoub and Hadi Ahmadi, both of whom operated the less popular Christmas Island smuggling route, as did Abu Quassey. In 2001 there were [only 11 people smuggling voyages](#) that arrived at Christmas Island prior to the sinking of SIEV X. So smugglers who operated this route were a very small coterie. In 2001 Indonesian Deputy Head of Police Public Relations, [Brigadier General Edward Aritonang reported the arrest of Hadi Ahmadi as a member of Abu Quassey's people smuggling syndicate](#) and later both smugglers would be [charged separately in different countries](#) with organising the same vessel - 'Yambuk'. So given that Mr S was reporting to the AFP on Hadi Ahmadi, it appears likely that he was also reporting on Abu Quassey.

During the 2004 Ayoub trial [an AFP agent testified](#) that an unnamed man who also gave evidence at the trial - quite probably Mr S - reported to him on a daily basis at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta about people smuggling activities during 2001.

We know that Abu Quassey's people smuggling network had been penetrated by Australian intelligence in the months leading up to the departure of SIEV X as [more than 43 reports on the smuggler were received between August and 18 October 2001](#) as detailed in the Defence Internal Review of Intelligence pertaining to SIEV X that was presented in evidence to the

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Senate Select Committee on A Certain Maritime Incident (CMI) in July 2002. Were some of these reports sourced from reports made to the Australian embassy in Jakarta by Mr S?

If none of these reports were sourced by Mr S then given that he was reporting to the AFP in 2001 on the smugglers who operated on the Christmas Island route, how can his work be considered effective or worthy of his large lump sum payment if he failed to alert his handlers at the Embassy to the activities of Abu Quassey who callously and criminally overloaded a leaky boat with more than 400 people resulting in the deaths of 146 children, 142 women and 65 men?

If some of these reports were sourced by Mr S then what exactly did Mr S tell the AFP of Abu Quassey and his SIEV X venture? Did the AFP have more knowledge of the SIEVX vessel than we have been previously led to believe?

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## The AFP and People Smugglers

by Marg Hutton  
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As Jack Waterford observed in the *Canberra Times* on the weekend, Sarah Ferguson's *Four Corners* expose of an alleged kingpin people smuggler 'overshadowed' a far more important story that ran in the Fairfax press the previous weekend. *Four Corners* told the story of 'Captain Emad' who it is claimed slipped through our immigration net as a refugee and continued his people smuggling business in Australia. However, there was a much more concerning story published the day before the *Four Corners* program aired of how our Federal Police have placed the lives of asylum seekers in extreme peril by delaying rescues of vessels in distress in order to protect the identity of their informants.

The *Four Corners* story and the media frenzy aftermath effectively took the air from Natalie O'Brien and smothered her story of a cover-up by Australian agencies concerning an asylum seeker vessel in distress that apparently sank in October 2009 with 108 people on board all presumed drowned. O'Brien revealed that it took almost four hours for the AFP and Customs to pass information about this vessel to the Australian Search and Rescue agency AMSA in order to protect the identity of the spy who had informed the AFP that the boat was in trouble.

O'Brien also revealed that this was not the first time that this had happened. In 2001 there was a similar delay by Customs in passing information to AMSA about an overdue vessel with 400 people on board because the AFP needed to clear the words used to convey this message to the rescue authority to protect a confidential source. This vessel was the doomed SIEVX; the boat had sunk days earlier, but this was not known by the AFP when it delayed contacting AMSA.

Two years ago Debbie Guest revealed that Waleed Sultani, an AFP informant working in Indonesia inside people smuggling syndicates in 2000-2001 was brought to Australia on a criminal justice visa, granted immunity from prosecution, given Australian citizenship and paid a one off fee of \$250,000 by the AFP after testifying at the trials of convicted people smugglers, Hasan Ayoub and Ali Al Jenabi. Robin de Crespigny, in her recently published book on the smuggler Ali Al Jenabi refers to a man she does not name but who shares an identical background with Sultani whom she calls 'the Weasel' and claims that he was 'working with Abu Quassey on the SIEVX' in 2001.

On Sunday, Natalie O'Brien continued her dramatic disclosures about the lost boat that sank in October 2009. She claims that the alleged organiser of this vessel was a man named Haji Mohammed and that two of his sons were among the 108 who lost their lives when the vessel foundered. O'Brien claims that Mohammed 'is believed to have cut a deal' with Australian authorities in exchange for 'easier treatment'.

Deeper questions need to be asked about the AFP and people smugglers than how did Captain Emad slip their net.

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