

10 July 2013

Singapore's State Coroner delivered findings of Inquiry into death of Shane Todd

The findings by the State Coroner into the death of Shane Todd concluded that he committed suicide by hanging himself, and that there was no foul play involved in his death.

Amongst his findings, the State Coroner noted that Shane was not in possession of confidential and valuable classified information – the “recipe” Shane allegedly hand-copied was, in fact, a formula found in his PhD dissertation. The alleged GaN power amplifier project between IME and Huawei did not materialise. The State Coroner said in his verdict:

“The potential GaN Power Amplifier Project did not ever materialise. Even if it did, (which I did not find), the listed specifications show that it would not have violated general export control laws, nor could it have been used for military applications; and the IME would not have surreptitiously researched beyond the listed specifications. The deceased was also not placed in a position of conflict as a result of him using the MOCVD System supplied by Veeco for a device researched in collaboration with Huawei”.

From the onset IME had maintained that it does not undertake classified military research and that the proposed GaN power amplifier project with Huawei never took place. The findings of fact by the State Coroner put to rest the unfounded allegations made against IME.

The Coroner also found that Shane's decision to commit suicide included his great difficulty in coping with the demands of the GaN group arising from his lack of expertise in this field of research. In addition, as Shane “was known to be a perfectionist”, he “probably took it hard upon himself when he failed to attain a certain level of proficiency in the GaN field of research”.

The State Coroner determined that Shane's suicide was not due to his workload at IME. He said:

“At the time of his death, the major stressor in the deceased’s mind was unlikely to be his workload. This was because the deceased had already tendered his resignation in May 2012 and his workload had gradually decreased whilst he served his 60-day notice”.

IME is saddened that a promising young man like Shane ended his life as a result of a medically diagnosed mental condition which he kept private and did not seek support from his colleagues and friends.

Speculations into the circumstances around Shane’s death began with the *Financial Times* (*FT*) article “Death in Singapore” published on 15 February 2013. In response to the Coroner’s verdict, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Law K Shanmugam said he hoped the *FT* would do the “honourable thing” and correct the inaccuracies in its article. He said Raymond Bonner, the journalist who wrote the article, had “recycled truths” and he hoped *FT* would “set out the truth”. Minister Shanmugam said that the conspiracy theory that Shane was murdered was based on “untruths, pure imagination and pure fantasy”.

Acting Manpower Minister Tan Chuan Jin, too, responded to the verdict with a Facebook posting: “So the *FT* believes that their irresponsible piece of journalism stands? Creating conspiracy out of nothing... I wonder if their sensationalism led the Todd family down this unfortunate path. Sad for the family in the first place. But doubly sad to create false hope for something more when there is nothing.”

FT’s reaction to the findings of the Coroner’s Inquiry stood in sharp contrast to the response from the US Embassy in Singapore:

“The death of Dr Shane Todd in June last year was a profound loss for his family, friends and colleagues, and our heartfelt sympathy goes out to them.

In accordance with Singapore law, a coroner’s inquiry was conducted to determine the cause of Dr Todd’s death.

The findings from that inquiry were released today.

Officers from the Embassy attended the entire hearing and were with the Todd family during their time in Singapore.

Ambassador David Adelman met with the Todd family in December last year and May.

The coroner heard testimony from a wide range of witnesses in open court and received evidence in the form of written statements and records.

The Todd family was given the opportunity to participate in the hearing and was represented by experienced Singapore legal counsel.

The inquiry into Dr Todd's death was comprehensive, fair and transparent."

The management and staff of IME would like to extend their condolences to Shane's family for their tragic loss and hope that they will be able to find closure. Shane will be remembered well in death as he was in life.