



AUSTRALIAN TOURIST AMONG FIRST FOREIGNERS TO BE ARRESTED AFTER THAILAND'S COUP

May 28, 2014 Lindsay Murdoch *South-East Asia correspondent for Fairfax Media* - with Melanie Kembrey. Mark Robert Coutelas (Source: Patong Police) *Photo: Patong Police*

Bangkok: An Australian tourist is one of the first foreigners to be arrested under Thailand's harsh military rule that could see some offenders prosecuted in military courts.

Mark Robert Coutelas, 53, was arrested at an apartment on the resort island of Phuket allegedly in possession of a hand gun, ammunition and a small amount of crystal methamphetamine, *Phuketwan* news website reported. The military junta that seized power last Thursday has sweeping powers under which soldiers will decide whether accused offenders are dealt with swiftly in special military courts or still-functioning civilian courts.



People facing military courts must hand their defence to a military prosecutor. Police said they went to Mr Coutelas' apartment at the Green Mango Apartment complex in Phuket after a tip-off. Mr Coutelas, believed to be from NSW, has been charged with possession of a firearm and Category 1 drug. Mr Coutelas posing with young women. *Photo: Facebook*

Tourists in Thailand have faced a 10pm to 5am curfew since last week, forcing the closure of restaurants, bars and clubs in resort areas. Such as Phuket where thousands of Australians are on holidays. But the junta has eased the curfew to midnight to 4am from Wednesday night. Under martial law, soldiers can detain anyone without charge for up to seven days or enter any building without a warrant.

On his Facebook page, Mr Coutelas has posted multiple images of himself with female companions. One photo shows a naked young woman holding a hand gun. Other photographs show Mr Coutelas with his arm down the mouth of an elephant and posing in an intimate position with a woman while wearing a horned mask.

His profile picture is of him wearing a devil mask and leaning over a woman. A Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade spokesperson said the Australian government was ready to provide consular assistance if requested in accordance with the consular services charter.

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/australian-tourist-among-first-foreigners-to-be-arrested-after-thailands-coup-20140528-zrqdk.html>