

OzPeace - Pine Gap

Nestled in a gap in the hills of the Western Macdonnell Ranges about 20 km South East of Alice Springs lies one of the most secret military bases in the world.

While speculation on exactly what Pine Gap does ranges from the sublime (Gareth Evans) to the ridiculous (aliens world), not even the Australian Parliamentarians tasked with deciding whether to renew the Pine Gap Agreement were allowed to be told what it is!

And we don't claim to know it all either, which is half the point:

What we do know is that

- we have a military base in Australia apparently run by the US NSA spooks that is so important that it was at least in part responsible for the sacking of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1975.
- it is an important part of the Star Wars program that Australia's own Office of National Assessments has advised the Government is not in our interests.
- it is recognised as playing an integral part in US wars and is a potential nuclear target.
- it is part of an international eavesdropping system which undermines privacy and sovereignty.
- its presence here is a threat to our neighbours in Asia and has a negative impact on our regional relationships.



Since its construction in 1968, Australian peace activists have opposed the secret Pine Gap base.

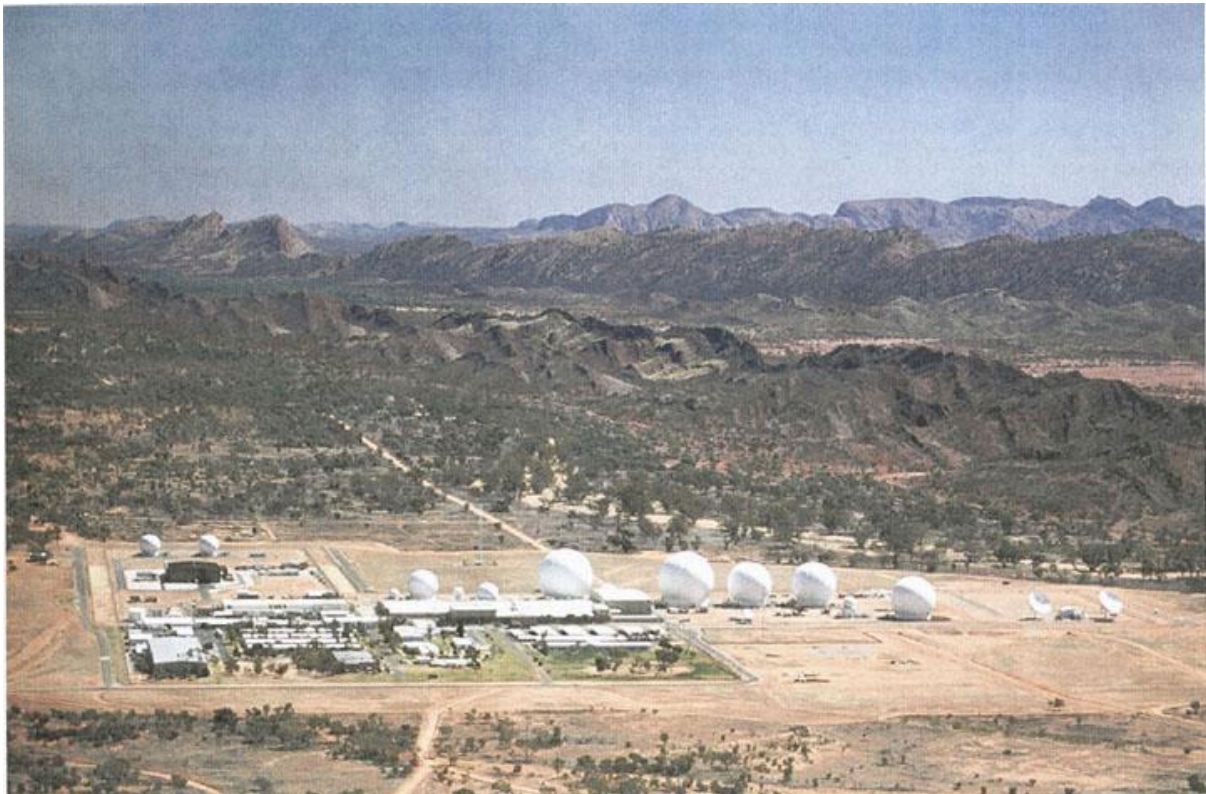
Despite its remote location, Pine Gap was the venue for a number of major national protests during the 1980s.

During the 1990's other peace issues such as the Gulf War, AIDEX arms fairs and the Balkan War kept peace activists busy in the coastal cities, although a major protest at the Nurrungar spy base (now closed with its functions transferred to Pine Gap) did result in the Australian Army being brought out against peace activists.

The new Bush administration's headlong rush into the Star Wars program and the Australian Government's open support for its use of Pine Gap has led the Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition (AABCC) and Friends of the Earth Action for Peace to call a National Protest at the Pine Gap.

Originally slated for Easter 2002, the peace work necessitated by the attacks of September 11 and their aftermath have led to the protest being postponed until 5 - 7 October this year.

For all the information you need on getting to the protest or how you can be involved without actually getting there, contact OzPeace.



Australian - US Military Relations

To understand Pine Gap in Australia, we need to look at Australia's relationship with the US military, particularly since World War II. But perhaps, as a starting point it would be instructive to look at the very first interaction between Australia and the US military.

In the 1890's before Australia was proclaimed as a nation, the United States was at war with Spain over commercial interests in Central America and the Philippines. This war led to the founding of the US Navy and its 'Great White Fleet' under President McKinley.

With the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902, aimed initially at recognising Russia as a common threat and reaffirmed in 1905 with a new emphasis on maintaining both nations' commercial and strategic interests in China, the US under President Roosevelt became edgy. It was thought that if the US came into conflict with Japan, most likely through the recent US takeover of the Philippines from Spain, this new Alliance would see Great Britain also in conflict with America. Relationships between Great Britain and the US were only just beginning to thaw and Roosevelt embarked on a stratagem of gunboat diplomacy. On 16 November 1907 fourteen thousand troops on sixteen warships began a circumnavigation of the globe on a whistlestop tour of American military strength.

As Australia was very much a part of the British Empire, it was assumed that if Britain was at war with America, then Australia would be also. Meanwhile Australian Prime Minister Deakin was concerned that the signing of this Treaty with Japan would lead to the withdrawal of the Royal Navy from the South East Asian region. As a white, English speaking nation, Australia has always felt out of place and vulnerable on the fringe of Asia and began making overtures to the USA. Roosevelt responded by ordering Rear Admiral Sperry to gather intelligence on Australian ports and cities during the Great White Fleet's visit with a view to a possible future invasion.

As it turns out no invasion was ever necessary. But so began the special relationship between Australia and the US: one where Australians respond to their xenophobic fears of Asia by welcoming, watering and bedding US troops while they quietly go about their business undermining our national sovereignty.

Australia continued to play its part as a member of the British Empire through the First World War, when America tried to stay neutral despite the continued German submarine attacks on their merchant navy.

After the rearming of Germany, assisted by US businessmen including the current President's great-grandfather and namesake George Walker (of GH Walker and Co, 1 Wall St, NY) led to the outbreak of the Second World War, the US once again tried to remain neutral and Australia found itself looking to an unwilling US for assistance in the Pacific.

There was much debate in the US as to whether to get involved in this new war and it was only by allowing the attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941 that the US was able to justify its entry, much to the relief of Australia.

Much is made of the story that the US 'saved' Australia from Japanese invasion during the Battle of the Coral Sea in 1942. The reality of this myth is that the Battle of the Coral Sea was fought over Port Moresby, not North Queensland. While the Imperial Navy attempted the invasion of Darwin in 1942, Japanese documents of the time show that the Imperial Army was unwilling to commit to an invasion of Australia as much of their force was tied up in China and the newly conquered SE Asian Islands.

The US did not save Australia from invasion as recent research shows that Australia was not under any real threat of attack; though admittedly, this could not have been known at the time. The US operations in the Coral Sea were aimed at protecting its shipping routes across the North of Australia, between the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

At any rate, with the entry of the US into the Second World War, an agreement was struck in 1948 between the 'white English speaking men's club' of the USA, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (represented by Australia) to share intelligence information. This agreement is known as the UKUSA Pact and remained secret until a slip of the pen by an Australian bureaucrat in May 1999. Professor Des Ball claims that this agreement is still locked in a vault in Russel Hill and will never see the light of day. I mention this in passing; more on UKUSA later.

America's greatest contribution to warfare in the Second World War was not its saving of the Pacific but the commencement of the age of the Military Industrial Complex. The US dominance came about through its enlisting of major corporations to fight the war. Remember, the US military could not build the atomic bomb, but American companies such as Eastman, GE, Chrysler, Allis, etc, working together, could.

Immediately following the end of the war, the Brenton Woods talks were held in the US with the agenda of establishing rules for 'free trade' and the reconstruction of Europe and Japan. These talks led to the establishment of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade, the IMF, the World Bank and ultimately, the World Trade Organisation. Hardly surprising, since one of the fundamental issues which led to the American Revolution was precisely that of free trade. These organisations set up the 'rules' for free trade, to which all but the military industry would be bound, which are coming under fire from the 'anti-globalisation' activists of today.

America saw in a broken and subdued Japan, the opportunity for a major industrial/commercial protectorate and set in place peace talks which basically gave them an open book to reinvigorate Japan's industrial base.

Australia meanwhile, was as always, paranoid about Asia and the Chifley Government, up for election and worried about the electoral ramifications in a basically racist society - the 'White Australia Policy' was in its heyday - DD refused to sign a Peace Treaty with Japan. Chifley's Exterior Affairs Minister, 'Doc' Evatt was attempting to draw up a 'whole of Pacific Pact' under the auspices of the nascent United Nations, of which he was the first President.

This 'Pacific Pact' never eventuated in the form Evatt imagined and the idea died with the Chifley Government when Menzies was elected on a wave of anti-communist hysteria in 1949, following the Chinese Revolution.

The revolution in China gave the US another reason for wanting to strengthen its presence in Japan and increased pressure on Australia to sign a Treaty. In 1951 John Foster Dulles (another American who financed the rearming of the Third Reich) was sent as envoy to pressure the Menzies Government. Exterior Minister Percy Spender pointed out that if they were to sign a Treaty with Japan, the electoral backlash would be so great that the Government would fall at the next election. Dulles considered Evatt a socialist and did what he could to ensure that a supportive 'friendly' government was maintained in Australia.

Spender and Dulles came up with the ANZUS Treaty as a way of allowing the Menzies Government to sign a Treaty with Japan while avoiding an electoral backlash by showing that all was OK as Australia had a strong military relationship with the USA and that they would assist in Australia's defence in the event of renewed hostilities. In reality, the ANZUS Treaty gives no such guarantees: it is little more than a chimera trotted out by successive Australian governments to console a xenophobic and paranoid population.

This chimera nonetheless has formed the cornerstone of Australian defence policy for more than half a century and underlies the establishment of the Pine Gap military base.

Ballistic Missiles and SIGINT

The ideas behind Pine Gap came from an investigation by the RAND Corporation in 1946. RAND (a contraction of Research and Development) was established as a private think tank company by the US Air Force (USAF) in 1946 for this project. It determined in its first report that new satellite technology could be used to spy from space. This idea sat on the backburner for a while and efforts were put instead into the development of high altitude spy planes, culminating in the development of Lockheed's U2.

At about the same time the USAF poached two engineers from GE, Simon Ramo and Dean Wooldrige and established them in their own private company, Ramo-Wooldrige Corporation (RWC) to develop intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). RWC surpassed all expectations and within five years had provided the Pentagon with the Minuteman, Titan and Thor ICBMs amongst others. In 1953 RWC merged with Thompson Products and became Thompson-Ramo-Wooldrige. Now known as TRW, it is one of the largest military companies in the world and had current US VP Dick Cheney on its board prior to his election in 2001.

After one of Lockheed's U2s was shot down over Russia, the need for alternative spying methods was paramount. Lockheed built the first satellites based on their U2 plane launched by TRW missiles which took rolls of film and dropped them over the Pacific for later retrieval by US warships. Pretty spectacular stuff for the early 1960s.

Simon Ramo began work on Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) satellites in the early 60's and by 1963 had come up with the draft of a working system based on a series of geostationary satellites code named 'Spook Birds' (early Rhyolites) which were capable of intercepting electronic communications and relaying information electronically to base stations on the ground at National Security Agency (NSA) HQ (Fort Meade, Maryland), Menwith Hill in Yorkshire (UK) and Pine Gap.

Defense Support Program and Nurrungar

Another completely separate spy satellite system was also developed by TRW. The Integrated Satellite (IS) program was the forerunner of the USAF's Defense Support Program (DSP). Another Treaty, once again citing the ANZUS and Status of US Forces Treaties was signed agreeing to the establishment of a second space base, Nurrungar, this time near the military township of Woomera in central South Australia.

The IS system was primarily for infrared detection of Soviet ballistic missile (BM) launches. A spin-off benefit of the IS was to provide a cover for the Spook Bird/RhyoliteD project associated with Pine Gap.

As Nurrungar was closed in 1999 and its DSP (and other?) functions transferred to Pine Gap, for the purposes of this paper I am including information on Nurrungar and the DSP as pertaining directly to Pine Gap's role and capabilities.

The DSP satellites provide information of ICBM and submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) in their boost phase and therefore provide early warning of any nuclear attack. For this reason they are said to help prevent nuclear war as it increases the possibilities of a retaliatory strike, they provide information on which missiles have been launched allowing the US to target intact missile silos, therefore making a first strike plan a less attractive option. The knowledge of an enemy's nuclear launches however, contributes to the US's nuclear war fighting plans. This has been attested to not just by opponents of nuclear war but by the (1985) Commander of the USAF's Space Command, General Hartinger who claimed that the DSP is tied to the warfighting structure.

The infra red capability to intercept the telemetric intelligence (TELINT) of BMs do not distinguish whether the type of warhead carried is nuclear or conventional (or chemical or biological) and were used to gain information on short range BM launches (such as Scuds) during the 1991 Gulf War.

These satellites also contain nuclear detonation (NUDET) sensors which detect atmospheric and space based nuclear explosions and therefore contribute to arms control verification. These sensors also in the event of a nuclear war, provide the US with information on the success rate of their own nuclear strikes, making the targeting of any successive strikes (if anyone was left alive to order them) more 'useful'.

There is no doubt in the strategic defence community that the DSP contributes significantly to the US' war fighting capabilities.

NUDET sensors are now also fitted to the US's Global Positioning System's (GPS) Navstar satellites which enable information on nuclear detonations to be sent directly to the US via satellite to satellite links. Therefore the DSP's role in verification is now redundant. Today, the information gained about Russian (and Chinese for that matter) BM boost phases is most useful in developing the 'Missile Defense' or Star Wars system. Professor Des Ball has revealed that masses of data collected on Soviet BM boost phases by Aerojet Electro Systems Corp. was passed on to the Strategic Defense Initiative Organisation in 1983. This is but the first way in which Pine Gap and Australia play an integral part in the Star Wars program.

Pine Gap

It is no coincidence that in the same year Ramo completed his draft plan, the US entered into a treaty with Australia known as the Agreement Concerning the Status of United States Forces in Australia. This treaty opened the way for the establishment of military bases in Australia through dealing with mundane matters such as the rights of US forces to carry

guns, sales tax exemptions, right of entry and even cites the NATO/Netherlands formula which enables US troops guilty of crimes in Australia to be tried by the US military.

1963 also saw the creation within the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the Office of the Deputy Director for Science and Technology (DDS&T) which assumed control of the Office of SIGINT Operations (OSO) which changed its name to the Office of Special Activities (OSA) and was the organisation tasked with dealing with TRW over the development of the SIGINT system. We need to be clear from the outset that the SIGINT system including its groundstations at Pine Gap and Menwith Hill are CIA operations. Vincent Marchetti, who was at the time Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director of the CIA, claims to have drafted a second, secret agreement in addition to the publicly available one, but what is contained in that agreement remains a secret.

In 1966 the Pine Gap Head Agreement was signed, citing Article II of the ANZUS Treaty and 'adverting' to the 1963 Status of US Forces Agreement as the underlying foundations by which a joint facility for 'general defence research in the space field' be built at Pine Gap. The first Chief of Facility of Pine Gap was Richard Stallings of the CIA's Office of Electronic Intelligence.

Pine Gap itself was commissioned in 1970, the same year that the first Rhyolite satellite was launched.

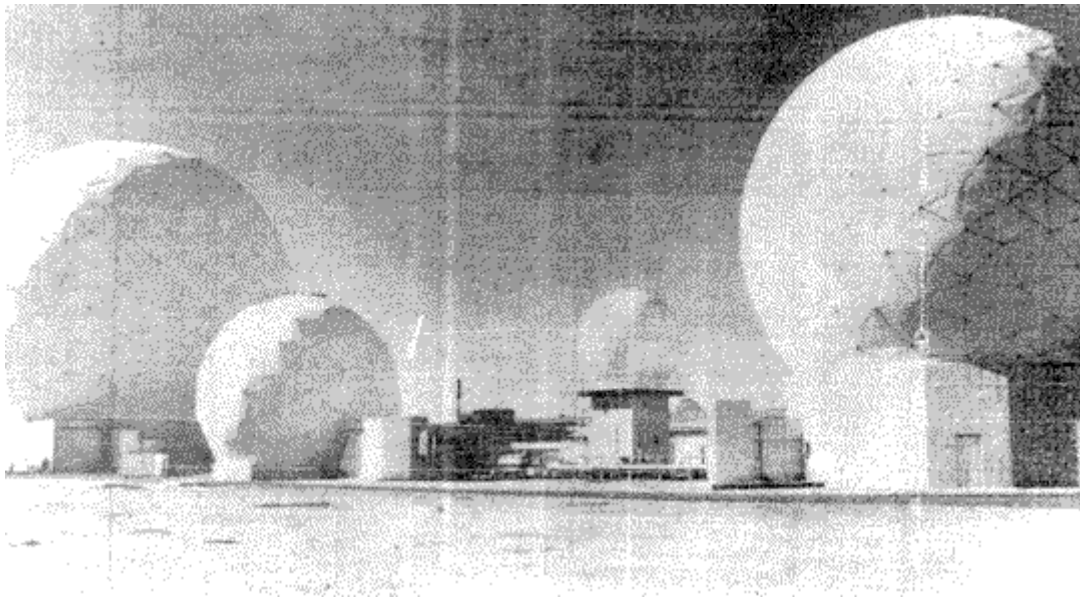
From the start the 'space base' was shrouded in secrecy. Initially Alice Springs residents first became aware of the construction of a road which, on inquiry, they were told was leading to the Mereenie Bores, a popular water source in the region. The land on which Pine Gap is located was basically commandeered from local landowner Des Bullen, who opposed the compulsory purchase of his land for fifty-two cents an acre. Construction unions went on strike over wages and conditions and Christopher Boyce (a former CIA employee who first broke the Pine Gap story) claimed that the CIA was infiltrating Australian trade unions to ensure the smooth operation of the base.

In the fine tradition of the military industrial complex, the running of Pine Gap was contracted out to US companies. Collins Radio of Dallas, Texas looks after the day to day mundane running of the base, while companies such as TRW, IBM and E-Systems (now a division of Raytheon) look after the satellite control, computer systems and overall system integration. Other corporations involved included (current status unknown) Digital Equipment Corporation (now owned by Compaq) and the Western Development Laboratories Division of Ford Aerospace (which was acquired by Loral Corp - who in turn grew out of the RAND Corp - and is now part of Lockheed Martin).

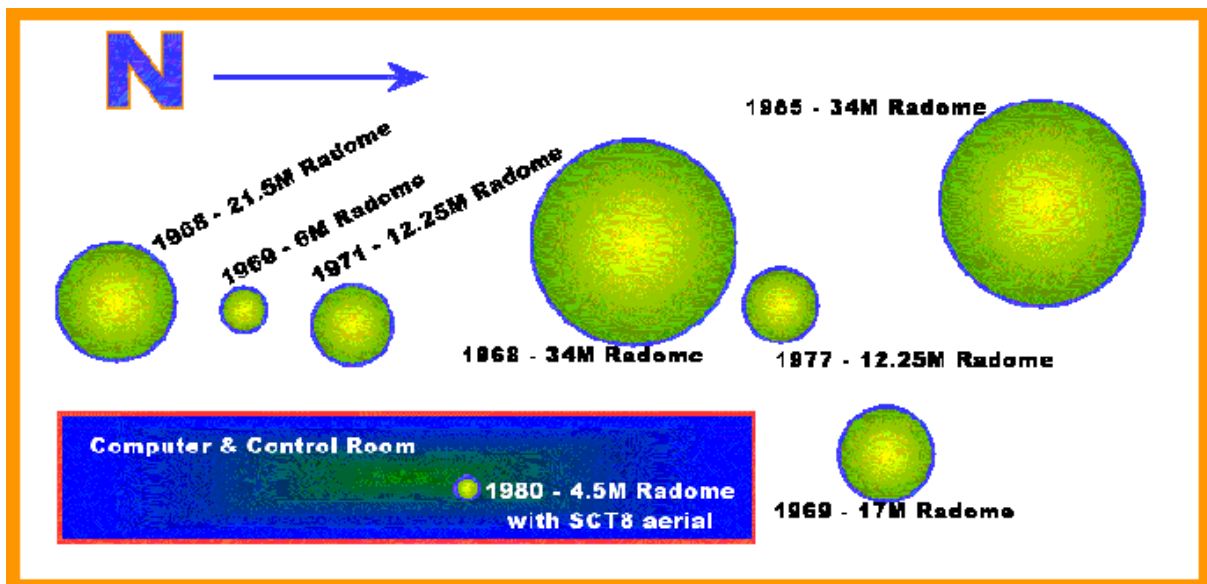
One of the determining factors of Pine Gap's location was its remoteness. Firstly, being in an 'electronically quiet' area cuts down white noise and other electronic interference which would hamper the collection of relatively weak signals coming from satellites orbiting at about 36 000 kilometres. Pine Gap's distance from coastlines or national borders makes it harder for download signals to be intercepted from spy ships and limits the electronic spill to a controllable area (in this case within the rugged terrain of central Australia).

The most striking feature of Pine Gap, for those who have been able to catch a glimpse of it, are the giant white geodesic 'golfballs', known as radomes. These balls cover satellite

dishes which communicate with the SIGINT satellites and provide protection both from the elements and from prying eyes which can determine the target satellites of each dish by their angle and direction.



Along with the radomes, Pine Gap houses a large computer room. Rumoured to be amongst the largest in the world, computer operators communicate with each other via headsets across the almost 6 000 M2 of floorspace.



Rumour has it that two more radomes have been built at Pine Gap since this information was gathered (from Des Ball's Book)

The satellites controlled from Pine Gap are known colloquially in the spy industry as Rhyolites, although this was the codename of the first generation of satellites, which have been superseded by Vortex, Acquacade, Chalet and Magnum. I do not have any information

on the name or specs of the current type of satellites being used, but assume that the capabilities of these satellites continue to be increased with every launch. For convenience sake, I refer to them all here as SIGINT satellites. For a description of the different types of satellites used up to about 1990 see American Geosynchronous SIGINT Satellites by Major A. Andronov.

SIGINT satellites are concerned with a range of different signals:

Telemetry Intelligence (TELINT) is the means by which militaries receive back information on how their missiles are working. This is usually through Very High Frequency (VHF) and microwave bandwidths. This is the primary source of information on other nations' BM programs.

Radar Intelligence (RADINT) monitors radar emissions, enabling the US to intercept a country's radar network providing it with information not just of its BM launches but all its radar information including military and commercial aircraft movements.

Communications Intelligence (COMINT) refers to the ability to intercept telephone and microwave communications. Most telephone, fax and email is transmitted across land by microwave links and it is this capability which enables Pine Gap to intercept personal and commercial information which may have nothing to do with BMs or even the military capabilities of the target nation. COMINT also monitors VHF radio communications as used in the field by militaries and paramilitaries as well as most essential services.

SIGINT satellites are also able to intercept and retransmit data to, from and between other satellites, whether military or commercial. This is another means by which Pine Gap has access to private and commercial communications.

For more information on the different forms of SIGINT see an extract from Jeffrey Richelson's 'The US Intelligence Community'.

The official Australian Government reason for supporting Pine Gap is its role in the verification of compliance with various arms control treaties such as the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaties (SALT) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty). However, in reality the whole SIGINT program was developed years before the US and Soviet Union ever agreed to the 'national technical means of verification' (NTMV) which Pine Gap is supposed to provide. As US Secretary of Defense ((1979) Harold Brown said 'Our need for such information did not begin with SALT.....With or without SALT we have a vital interest in keeping track of Soviet strategic forces. Doing so is our highest intelligence priority' (quoted in Des Ball - Pine Gap).

The information gathered by Pine Gap (and Nurrungar) was not limited to Soviet strategic forces. In 1973 all US bases in Australia (including NW Cape - now under nominal Australian control) were put on full alert during the Yom Kippur War without the knowledge, let alone approval of the Australian Government.

Indeed a lot of Pine Gap's work was carried out not only without the approval of the Australian Government but within an official US policy of requiring its agents to lie to the Australians involved in the SIGINT program. Christopher Boyce claims that he was

instructed openly to break the agreement with the Australia and not inform Australia of the advanced Rhyolite project known as Argus and that this, together with interference in Australian trade unions and the destabilising of the Whitlam Labor Government were the reasons he decided to turn and spill the beans to the Soviets.

In November 1975 Prime Minister Whitlam demanded to know more about Pine Gap in the lead up to renegotiating the Head Agreement the next year. When the information was not forthcoming he released the information that Pine Gap was run by Richard Stallings of the CIA. Sir John Kerr, who had well known CIA links (through the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom and Law Asia) was briefed by the CIA on 8 November just three days before precipitating the greatest constitutional crisis in Australia's history after the CIA sent a cable to ASIO threatening to end the intelligence relationship.

Christopher Boyce claims that CIA operatives at TRW's Redondo Beach HQ referred to Australia's Governor General as 'our man, Kerr'. It is also believed that CIA acted to destabilise the Australian Government through 'Khemlani loans affair' and through false cables leaked to the press by the Nugan-Hand Bank. How much of all this is conspiracy theory is hard to say but there have been many statements from former CIA personnel and former Government Ministers such as Bill Morrison and Clyde Cameron to show that Whitlam's concern about Pine Gap was at least in part responsible for his sacking by John Kerr on 11 November 1975.

Former Prime Minister McMahon later claimed that he doubted that he or any Australian was ever told the truth about Pine Gap and recently Malcolm Fraser, who succeeded Whitlam and became known as 'Kerr's cur' has come out and stated that the use of Pine Gap (for Star Wars) makes Australia a target.

Another sinister role of Pine Gap is its use as a station in the Echelon spy network. Though the Echelon system is primarily run from the Australian Defence Signals Directorate's (DSD) Kojarena ground station near Geraldton in Western Australia, Pine Gap, as the major US facility in Australia also plays a prominent role; quite possibly as a relay station due to its secure communication links via fibre-optic cable all the way to CIA HQ at Langley, Virginia. Pine Gap also sends 'hard copy' of downloaded data through weekly USAF Starlifter visits to Alice Springs Airport. Pine Gap's capability in directing the movement of geostationary satellites and its interception capabilities through COMINT would also be being used by the Echelon network.



Kojarena Echelon base

The Echelon system is thought to be operated under the UKUSA pact and is basically a computer program whose power lay in its ability to make sense and find useful and relevant information out of the overwhelmingly vast amounts of data intercepted. There has been strong criticism of the US using information gathered and interpreted by this network to gain commercial benefit for US based companies over, particularly, European companies.

Recent revelations that the Echelon network was used to spy on communications between the Maritime Union of Australia and Capt Arne Rinnan of the Norwegian MV Tampa (while it was being held by the Australian military just outside Australian territorial waters after attempting to land with 438 asylum seekers the Tampa had rescued from a sinking ferry in international waters) show just how invasive the system can be. It is claimed that intercepted information was used by the Howard Government to determine on the fly policy in the lead up to a Federal election at the time.

There is no reason to believe that this was an isolated incident, even though that is most likely to be the finding of Australian Director of Intelligence Bill Blick. The question out there is how many other communications between organisations working for social justice have been intercepted and used by a variety of governments to thwart their efforts?

For more information on the Echelon system see the American Civil Liberties Union's EchelonWatch site and Duncan Campbell's paper Interception Capabilities

Yet another aspect of Pine Gap is its place in the Missile Defense or 'Star Wars' plans of the US military. As the US Space Command's (USSC) own pictures show, Pine Gap is one of the three main sites for the Space Based Infrared Satellites (SBIRS) which form the backbone of the system.

An OzPeace page on Star Wars is in progress, but in the meantime checkout the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space's website.

As GW Bush leads the world into a state of unending war, the uses to which Pine Gap will be put become even more alarming than ever. Pine Gap has been used in devastation wreaked on Afghanistan in response to the attacks on the World Trade Centre and will shortly be used again in Iraq, where conservative estimates of up to one million people have already been killed by the on-going economic blockade (now run by Australia) and the thousands of pounds of radioactive ammunition used over the last eleven years.

The 9 March 2002 revelation in the Los Angeles Times that the Pentagon has drawn up a 'Nuclear Posture Review' which outlines the possibility of for nuclear weapons being used against seven nations (Russia, China, North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Libya) as well as in the Middle East conflict leads to the conclusion that Pine Gap will be used in a nuclear war. As Bill Hayden, in his time as Foreign Affairs Minister in the Hawke Government stated 'to prepare to fight a limited nuclear war... is to make a nuclear war more thinkable and therefore more possible.'

12 March 2002

*Much of the information on the technical aspects of Pine Gap and the SIGINT system was gleaned from Prof Des Ball's seminal work *Pine Gap: Australia and the US Geostationary Signals Intelligence Satellite Program* (Allen & Unwin 1988) which unfortunately, is out of print. If you can get your hands on a copy, we urge you to do so.

*The history of the Great White Fleet's visit to Australia came from Gary Brown's *Upside Downside: ANZUS After 50 years* Current Issues Brief #3 2001-02 of the Dept of the Parliamentary Library