

Press Information Kit

EARLY WORKS & FILM CAMP



photo: Kristian Laemmler-Ruff

Desmond Ball - the man who saved the world

Writer Director John Hughes - Producers Philippa Campey, John Hughes
Developed and Produced with the assistance of VicScreen



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TWILIGHT TIME

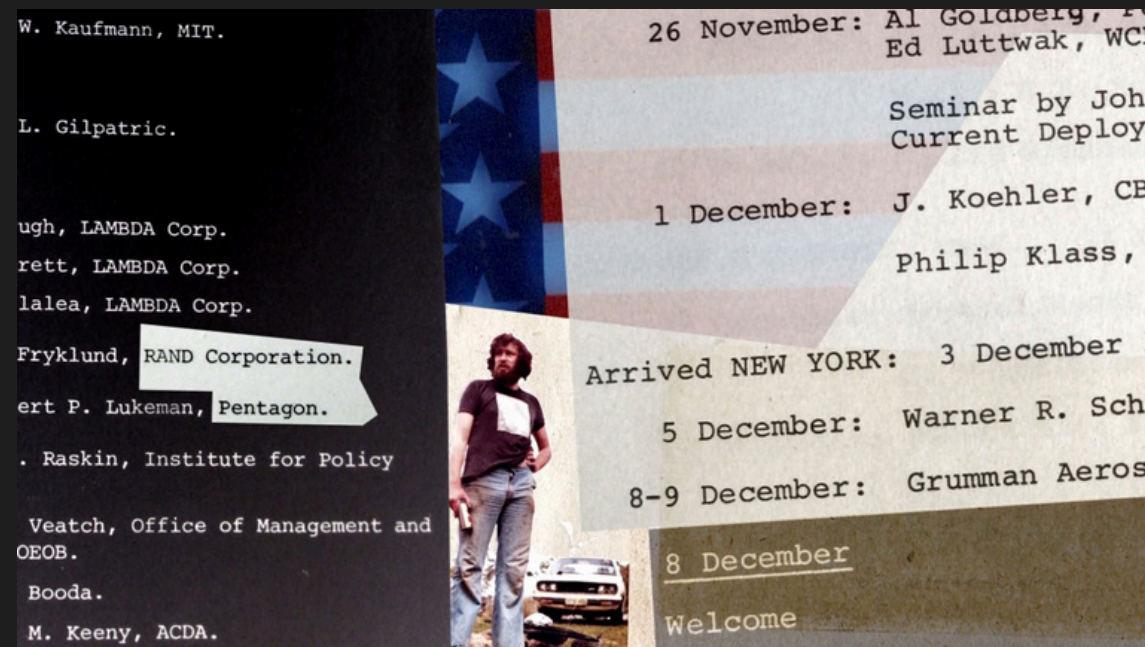
Desmond Ball: 'insurgent intellectual'

Desmond Ball (1947-2016) was hailed by Jimmy Carter as “the man who saved the world” as he established the fallacy of the doctrine of ‘limited’ nuclear war. His study of Pine Gap - in the heart of Australia’s central desert – infuriated Australia’s defence establishment. Des Ball’s curiosity and commitments offer a window on nuclear war fighting, mass surveillance, global strategy and defence. Des’ work on Australian signals intelligence in Timor-Leste informed Australian citizens on issues governments prefer remain secret. He trekked deep into the sensitive borderlands of Burma and Thailand advising persecuted minorities on signals intelligence. Des Ball made a difference; his insights are everyday more urgent

Des Ball was an Australian defence analyst. He grew up in the small town of Timboon in country Victoria and made his way as a scholarship student through the Australian National University (ANU) where he led the ANU's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (1984-1991).

Des gazed at signals intelligence facilities around the world and worked out what they did and why. He challenged the orthodoxy of his field with clear-sighted ethical commitments to an independent Australia.





Des was in Berkeley in 1970, when the movement against the war in Vietnam closed down Columbia University and the Weather Underground fought war with war. He was with the RAND Corporation shortly after Daniel Ellsberg released the Pentagon Papers. He advised ex-Presidents Carter and Ford on nuclear disarmament and Australian defence specialists in governments and oppositions.



Australia hosts the world's largest American intelligence base outside the United States. Yet its functions, capacities and practical effects are little known. These functions are increasingly engaged with war-fighting. We are complicit in illegal wars and targeted killings. When Australia does commit troops to foreign wars no parliamentary approval is required; it is a decision taken by small coterie of Cabinet.

Director's statement

And then there is AUKUS, formally announced at the White House in September 2021

The film had been under way for a number of years when suddenly Scott Morrison, as Prime Minister, announced the AUKUS pact on September 16, 2021, followed remarkably quickly with the ALP's endorsement and formal commitment at San Diego on 15 March 2023. Paul Keating remarked that this was the worst international decision made by a Labor government since Billy Hughes tried to introduce conscription in 1916. Keating's commentary on AUKUS accords closely with that of Hugh White ('The AUKUS Delusion'), Susannah Patten (Lowy Institute), Rex Patrick and many other experts in this field who have argued that the nuclear-powered submarine deal seems far more favourable to what American hawks believe to be in their strategic interests and with very little strategic value to Australia. There is a pattern here.

TWILIGHT TIME addresses its audiences as a kind of essay film. As such it offers an idiosyncratic voice drawing on found sources and a multitude of archival materials. The films, photographs and texts fashioned into this assembly catalogue social activism and scholarship questioning Australian defence and foreign policy that has too often unquestioningly assumed Australia's interest necessarily coincides with the ambitions of the American empire.



In February 2024, after revealing his plans to resign from Parliament, ex Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he would be joining consulting firm American Global Strategies as non-executive vice chairman. He will also assume a strategic advisor role with AUKUS investor DYNE Maritime, alongside former US Secretary of State, fellow evangelical Christian and ex-CIA director Mike Pompeo. The venture capital company DYNE invests in technologies related to the joint security agreement that was orchestrated under Mr. Morrison's leadership.

<<https://www.news.com.au/technology/innovation/military/questions-raised-after-scott-morrison-s-new-defence-job-revealed/news-story/683c89771b8b3d77ad7a380789468797>>



My work draws on archival materials engaging creatively with an imagined community of fellow artists and filmmakers. TWILIGHT TIME also refashions scenes from my own old films and important classic documentary from the Australian independent film movement.

This project got underway in May 2019 with a visit to Canberra to meet with Nicholas Farrelly, at that time a research fellow at ANU's School of Political and Strategic Studies, and a good friend of Des Ball. Nicholas was one of the editors of a book in honour of Des published in 2012 (*Insurgent Intellectual*, ISEAS Publishing). Nicholas also had interviewed Des for an ANU project.

Des died in 2016 and I regretted that I hadn't managed to film an interview with him, despite a long-term intention, inspired by the work of Richard Tanter, to produce a project on Pine Gap, and a great admiration for Des' incredibly prolific critical scholarship in the fields of Australian defence and intelligence studies.

While I was in Canberra I met with Des' family, his widow Annabel and daughter Katie, and sister Raelene. These initial conversations were encouraging; they endorsed the idea in principle. Then we had COVID, and the lockdowns.



PEACE PILGRIMS is informed by Kieran Finnane's book *Peace Crimes* (QUP 2020)

In the breaks between lockdowns I travelled to Darwin for a peace movement conference concerned about the American military build up in the Northern Territory; to Canberra perusing the archives and reporting on what I was up to with Katie and Raelene, and to Alice Springs.

Here, one of first research interviews I shot was with Kieran Finnane. Kieran was working on what was to become the book *Peace Crimes* (2020, University of Queensland Press). The interview we shot turned out to be useful to Kieran in launching the book.

And her book in turn contributed to a half-hour 'spin off' from TWILIGHT TIME - the film PEACE PILGRIMS (2021). Jessica Douglas-Henry at ABC TV's *Compass*, saw that the story the book told constituted an intriguing exercise in religion and ethics through the actions and ideas of the small group of Christian activists arrested and tried for their trespass of Pine Gap, where they sung laments for the dead and prayed for peace; they faced 7 years in jail.

PEACE PILGRIMS (2021) and TWILIGHT TIME (2024) tell different stories, while sharing essential editorial and creative imperatives.

PEACE PILGRIMS went to air on the ABC in August 2021 and is now streaming with Ronin Films and Kanopy. This iteration of the TWILIGHT TIME project afforded the opportunity to introduce the question of Indigenous consent to the use of the land Pine Gap occupies in Arrentre country. PEACE PILGRIMS interviewed traditional owners Felicity Hayes and Peter 'Coco' Wallace.

The Catholic Worker activists Jim and Franz Dowling, before entering the base in 2016, had sought permission from Peter 'Coco' Wallace, a widely acknowledged Eastern Arrernte custodian of the land on which Pine Gap was built. In PEACE PILGRIMS Franz says: "We did ask permission. We asked permission from the people who really matter."

Felicity Hayes, Eastern Arrernte traditional owner says, "nobody explained this to the elders. Still no explanation, we got nothing. We didn't know about this."

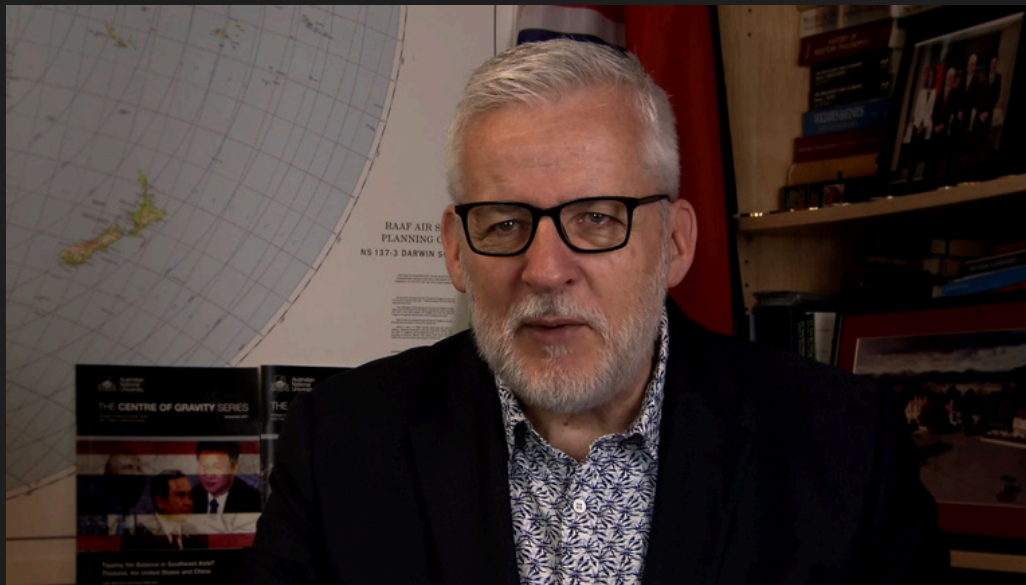


Peter 'Coco' Wallace, Felicity Hayes in PEACE PILGRIMS (2021)

In September 2016 five 'Peace Pilgrims' trekked overnight through the central Australian bush into the secretive military facility Pine Gap, 18kms. east of Alice Springs. Their plan of action, according to the police record of interview, was to "pray for a miracle". They were spotted by surveillance CCTV around 3.30 a.m. as they approached the 'prohibited area' and were arrested about an hour before sunrise. When the sun came up on September 29, 2016 Margaret Pestorius, Jim Dowling, Jim's son Franz, Timothy Webb and Andy Paine were to be charged under the Defence (Special Undertakings) Act, a law originally designed to protect 1950s British nuclear tests on Montebello Island, Emu Fields and Maralinga. (PEACE PILGRIMS Information Kit, 2021)

TWILIGHT TIME – featured contributors

John Blaxland



John Blaxland is currently Director of the ANU North America Liaison Office and Professor of International Security and Intelligence Studies in the Strategic and Defence Studies Center (SDSC) at the Australian National University (ANU). He was formally an army intelligence officer and served as defence attaché to Thailand and Myanmar in the Australian embassy in Bangkok. Here he first met Des Ball. John Blaxland was subsequently invited to join SDSC. He has co-authored several volumes of the official history of ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation) and written widely on signals intelligence and defence. His most recent book Revealing Secrets: An Unofficial History of Australian Signals Intelligence and the Advent of Cyber (UNSW Press, 2023) follows controversy around his standing down from leadership of an ANU contract to produce the official history of the Australian Signals Directorate: see Anthony Galloway, (SMH 18 September 2020). "Cyber spy agency dumps military historian from writing its official history".

Brian Boyd



Brian Boyd is a trade unionist. As a student activist at La Trobe University in the early 1970s he was active in the anti-foreign bases campaign, and a key organiser of the 'Long March' to North West Cape in 1974. After a long career with the Builders Labourers Federation Brian was elected secretary of the Victorian Trades Hall Council in May 2005. At an anti-'Work Choices' rally in 2006 Boyd famously remarked, "[Prime Minister] John Howard is as welcome in Melbourne today as a yellow-bellied black snake at a barbecue!" In 1991 Brian published *Inside the BLF: a union self-destructs*. Among other research and community advocacy projects, Brian is a longstanding member of BirdLife Australia. *Brian Boyd - A biography of a Trade Unionist* (Gordon McCaskie, 2012), is published by Lambert Academic Press.

Daniel Ellsberg (1931–2023)



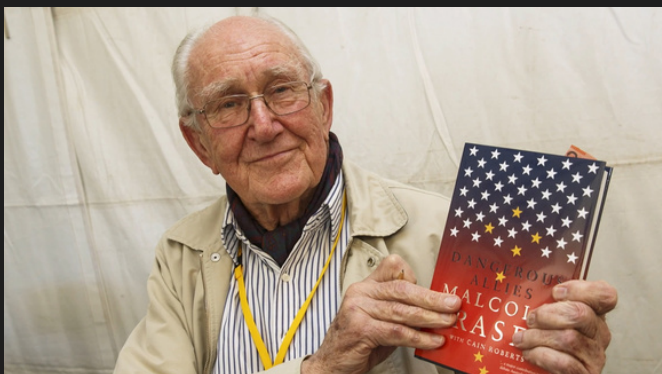
In 1961 Daniel Ellsberg, a consultant to the Department of Defense and the White House, drafted Secretary Robert McNamara's plans for nuclear war. Later he leaked the Pentagon Papers – a secret history of American policy planning for their war in Vietnam. He wrote and lectured widely on the continuing threat of nuclear war and the need for 'whistle blowing'. He is the subject of Oscar nominated documentary *The Most Dangerous Man in America* (Judith Ehrlich & Rick Goldsmith 2009). His last book was *The Doomsday Machine: confessions of a nuclear war planner* (Bloomsbury 2017).

Kieran Finnane



In her 2020 book *Peace Crimes: Pine Gap National Security and Dissent*, Alice Springs journalist and essayist Kierann Finnane tracks the actions, motivations and legal battles involving a group of radical Christians - the 'peace pilgrims' – who, in breaking into Pine Gap to pray and lament, sought to raise questions among Australian citizens concerning the covert wars waged through the secret military base. The documentary film PEACE PILGRIMS (2021) is indebted to Kieran Finnane's book.

Malcolm Fraser (1930–2015)



Malcolm Fraser was Prime Minister of Australia between 1975-1983. Under Prime Minister Harold Holt he was appointed Minister for the Army at the height of Australia's involvement with the American war in Vietnam (1966-1968). As leader of the Liberal-Country Party Opposition during the Whitlam government (1972-1975), Fraser famously assumed the position of caretaker Prime Minister on November 11, 1975, appointed by Governor-General Kerr following Kerr's dismissal of the Whitlam government. Later Fraser reflected deeply on Australia's bi-partisan complacency, and the country's dependency on 'great and powerful friends'. He published *Dangerous Allies* (2014) "the most radical book ever to have been written by an ex-Australian Prime Minister" (Robert Manne).

Kristian Laemmle-Ruff



Photographic artist Kristian Laemmle-Ruff's art is driven by an ethical imperative; his photographic practice is in tune with the contemporary 'counter-surveillance' art movement. Kieran Finnane's book *Peace Crimes* (2020) was inspired in part by the work of this talented photographer, as it first appeared in an Alice Springs gallery in 2016, in the lead up to a peace movement conference convened by the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN).

Kristian describes for the film his capturing of dawn images of Pine Gap that have now become iconic following their publication in exhibitions, books and scholarly articles. Kristian's art practice offers a striking example of the contribution that a creative project can offer, initiating and enhancing democratic debate in the public interest. This intersection of engaged creative work with social and political critique is an important strand of inquiry for TWILIGHT TIME.

"I put these bars over the top [...] the blue and red bars - the colours of the Australian flag, the American flag, the British flag - the colours of the Empire I guess. It could be a barcode or it could be a prison; a kind of separation between a place where you're not supposed to be or not supposed to see, and the outside world"



Victor Marchetti (1929–2018)



After 14 years with the United States' CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), rising to Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director in 1968, Marchetti resigned; and (with John D. Marks) Marchetti wrote *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* (1974) a book that set out chapter and verse the dangers to American democracy and its international legitimacy caused by continuing Presidential support for the CIA's covert action programs that were dedicated to interference in the domestic affairs of the United States and other nations. The book informed the 1975 Church Committee (US Senate inquiry led by Senator Frank Church) on CIA abuses, torture, coups, assassination attempts, manipulation of the global press, illegal electronic surveillance, etc. In the early 1960s Marchetti collaborated with his CIA colleague and friend Richard Stallings - the first CEO at Pine Gap - in drafting the Agreements (both public and secret) governing the relationship between the Australian Department of Defence and the US agencies involved.

Hamish McDonald



Hamish McDonald is one of Australia's most distinguished foreign correspondents, writing from Jakarta, Tokyo, New Delhi and Beijing. He was Regional Editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in Hong Kong and Foreign Editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald*. He has won two Walkely Awards for reporting from Asia and was made an Inaugural Fellow of the Australian Institute of International Affairs. Hamish McDonald contributed to *Masters of Terror: Indonesia's Military and Violence in East Timor* (ed. Richard Tanter, Desmond Ball, Gerry van Klinken, 2006) and with Des Ball co-authored *Death in Balibo, Lies in Canberra* (2000). Hamish McDonald wrote on Des Ball's final opinion on Pine Gap for *The Saturday Paper* in October 2016.

Bill Robinson



Bill Robinson writes the blog *Lux Ex Umbra*, which focuses on Canadian signals intelligence activities. He has been an active student of signals intelligence matters since the mid-1980s, and from 1986 to 2001 was on the staff of the Canadian peace research organization Project Ploughshares. He has been an important collaborator with Des Ball and Richard Tanter on their *Pine Gap Project* with the Nautilus Institute.

Gil Scrine



Gil is a filmmaker, producer and film distributor. His political documentaries, *Home on the Range* and *Buried Alive: The Story of East Timor* are both award-winning films (Greater Union Award 1982 and AFI Award 1989 respectively). He has made numerous films as writer-director, and producer and worked as an editor in the independent sector, particularly in documentary. Gil started Antidote Films, Cinema Ventures and Beamafilm – each designed to address specific needs of documentary film distribution. For his work in the Australia East Timor Association (from 1991 – 1997) and for his film *Buried Alive*, Gil received the Ordem de Timor Leste (2014) awarded by President Taur Matan Ruak. Gil's current project *SWINDLE: Australia, East Timor and the Art of the Steal* is forthcoming.

Richard Tanter



Richard Tanter is Senior Research Associate, [Nautilus Institute](#) and Honorary Professor in the School of Political and Social Sciences at the University of Melbourne. Richard has held senior academic posts dealing with defence studies, peace and security in a number of Australian and overseas universities including as Professor of International Relations in the School of Environmental and Social Studies with Kyoto Seika University in Japan. He is a former president of the [Australian board of the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons \(ICAN\)](#), which was awarded the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) in October 2017. His friendship and collaborations with Des Ball began in the 1970s when Richard worked closely with activist groups supporting East Timorese independence. Richard and Des collaborated on a number of books and co-authored the *Pine Gap Project* at the Nautilus Institute with Bill Robinson and others, generating numerous research papers, comprehensively documenting Pine Gap's history, changing capabilities and functions. Tanter's most recent book with Des Ball is *The Tools of Owatatsumi: Japan's Ocean Surveillance and Coastal Defence Capabilities*, Canberra, ANU Press, 2015.

Phil Thornton



As a veteran independent journalist in South East Asia, Phil Thornton has dedicated his career to giving a voice to the voiceless. In his reportage on armed conflicts, workers' rights, and social justice, Phil has learnt that "ordinary people have to get up and make a stand, otherwise there won't be much left to stand for". Phil contributes to Karen News, an influential on-line news site producing reportage, weekly television broadcast segments and radio in both the Karen and Burmese languages. Phil writes for the International Federation of Journalists on Myanmar/Burma and contributed a chapter "Big Brain on the border" for the book *Insurgent Intellectual: essays in honour of Professor Desmond Ball* (eds., Nicholas Farrelly, Sheryn Lee, Brendon Taylor, 2012 ISEAS)

Jo Vallentine



Jo is a veteran feminist, peace and anti-nuclear advocate. She was elected to the Senate in 1985 as member of the Nuclear Disarmament Party: 'the first peace activist in the world to be elected to a national parliament on the single issue of nuclear disarmament'. She became an independent Senator and later a representative of the Greens WA (1990 – 1992). Speaking about the findings of the Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia (the tests took place at Maralinga and elsewhere between 1955 and 1963), Jo noted the 'secrecy that surrounds all things nuclear in this country'. She was frequently arrested for her activism, including at the Pine Gap Action of 1987. She criticised the Labor Government for being just as evasive as its conservative predecessor about the purposes of American bases in Australia. She said, 'We thoroughly deserve our reputation of subservience' (Parliament of Australia, Biographical history of the Australian Senate). Jo Vallentine has continued her dedicated engagement with the peace movement, Indigenous rights and grass roots community activism.

Ken White



A student activist at La Trobe University in the early 1970s Ken White was first arrested in St Kilda Road Melbourne for demonstrating against the Honeywell Corporation. Honeywell manufactured fragmentation bombs for the American war in Vietnam. Ken was also a unionist, and worked as a Builders Labourer. He was an organiser of the 'Long March' to North West Cape in 1974, seeking to draw attention to secrecy surrounding the base's functions. Governments had claimed North West Cape was a communication station for shipping, but it was actually for communicating with American nuclear-armed Polaris submarines, issuing orders for their deployment. The base was put on full alert through fears of a nuclear exchange during the Yom Kippur War in October 1973. The Australian government was not informed of this. Ken White has had a long career teaching in NSW and enjoys ongoing friendships formed on the 'Long March'.

Research Links

Pine Gap

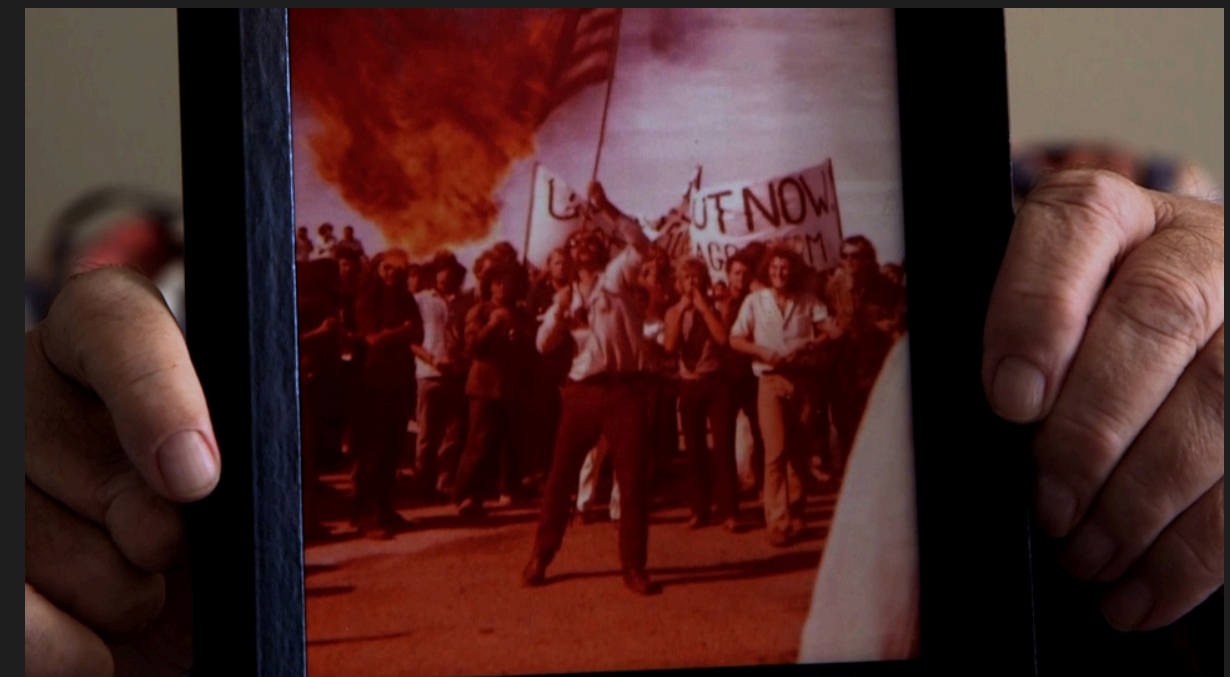
'The Pine Gap Project' Richard Tanter et. al. Nautilus Institute, <<https://nautilus.org/briefing-books/australian-defence-facilities/pine-gap/the-pine-gap-project/>>

'The Base: Pine Gap's role in US War fighting'
Peter Cronau, Jess O'Callaghan 'Background Briefing' ABC RN (2017)

Kieran Finnane (2020) *Peace Crimes: Pine Gap, National Security and Dissent* University of Queensland Press

Tom Gilling (2019) *Project Rainfall: the secret history of Pine Gap* Allen & Unwin

David Rosenberg (2011) *Inside Pine Gap: the spy who came in from the desert* Hardie Grant Books



Research links (con't)

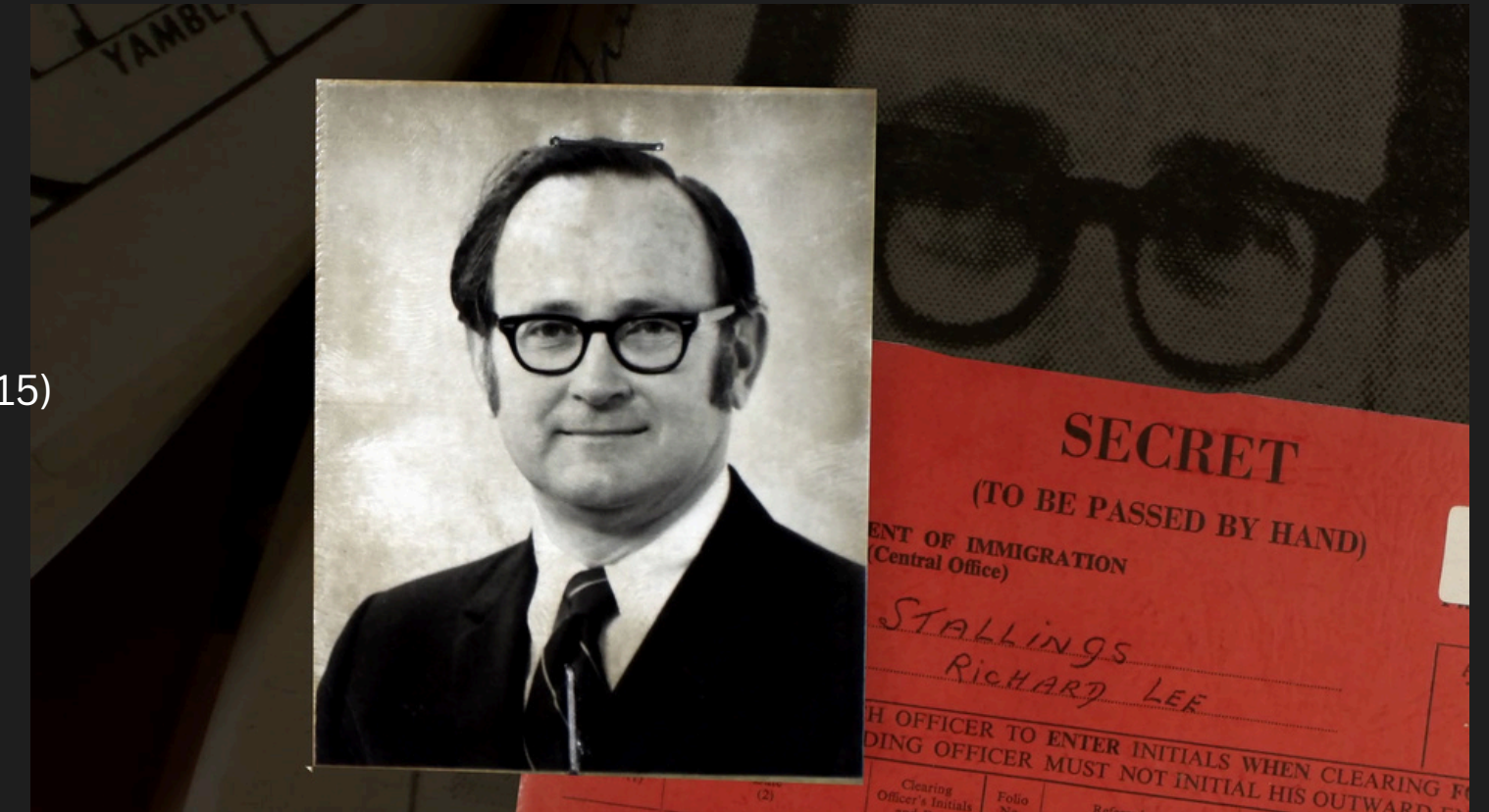
Pine Gap and the dismissal (November 11, 1975)

'Phillip Fraser: <<http://www.coorabellridge.com/whitlamciamotherjones>>
<<http://www.coorabellridge.com/home/2015/8/24/gough-whitlam-and-the-cia>>

Guy Rundle (2019), 'All facts point to US involvement in the Dismissal' Crikey (November 13, 2015)
< <https://www.crikey.com.au/2015/11/13/rundle-all-facts-point-to-us-involvement-in-the-dismissal/>>

Max Suich (2014), 'Whitlam death revives doubts of US role in his sacking' *Australian Financial Review* (31 October, 2014)

'The Eleventh' ABC podcast, Alex Mann, Tim Roxburgh (2021)



The Military Industrial Complex

'Michelle Fahy, *Undue Influence* <undueinfluence@substack.com>

Research links (con't)

WAR POWERS

‘We have ceded Australian sovereignty, over matters of peace and war, to the United States.’

Former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser

<https://warpowersreform.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/AWPR_BOOKLET_WEB_FINAL.pdf>

<[Phillip Fraser: <http://www.coorabellridge.com/whitlamciamotherjones>](http://www.coorabellridge.com/whitlamciamotherjones)

<<http://www.coorabellridge.com/home/2015/8/24/gough-whitlam-and-the-cia>>

Australian troops can be deployed with only the Prime Minister or Executive’s approval. Such are Australia’s war powers. Moreover, while facilities like Pine Gap continue to operate, Australia cannot resist involvement in American wars. Even without sending troops, Australia cannot stop America from using Pine Gap to target drones and American weapons systems in acts of war.

AUKUS

‘It will take some adroitness and determination to escape this tangled web’.

Allan Behm (March 2024)

The Albanese Government’s complicity in joining with Britain and the United States in a tripartite build of a nuclear submarine for Australia under the AUKUS arrangements represents the worst international decision by an Australian Labor government since the former Labor leader, Billy Hughes, sought to introduce conscription to augment Australian forces in World War One.

AUKUS Statement by PJ Keating,
The National Press Club 15 March 2023

Research links (con't)

AUKUS (con't)

The Virginia class submarine is an outstanding boat that meets America's particular need for a hunter-killer able to destroy ballistic missile submarines. On any objective analysis, it is not premised on Australia's defence capability needs or Australia's bipartisan preference to build and sustain such a capability. [...] The conceit is that China presents a strategic threat to Australia—it wants to subjugate us—and that Australia, sometime in the next forty or fifty years, will be able to defeat China (well, with a little help from our friend) [...] And the deceit is that AUKUS is anything more than a political non-solution to a significant defence capability problem that is centred not on fighting China but on defending Australia. It will take some adroitness and determination to escape this tangled web.

Allan Behm, March 2024

< <https://johnmenadue.com/webs-and-deceit-the-politics-of-aukus/> >

May 2024: Cameron Leckie wrote in a commentary on the government's recently released National Defence Strategy:

The 'National Defence Strategy' is not a strategy. It is an ideology: an ideology that firmly ties Australia's future to that of the United States. A horrifying thought. [...] The most complex and challenging strategic challenge that Australia faces is disentangling ourselves from a corrupted alliance. Abandoning AUKUS, which is looking increasingly unachievable (and thus offers a face-saving exit strategy) should be the first step."

<<https://johnmenadue.com/australias-national-defence-strategy-where-ideology-trumps-strategy/>>

In April 2024 Rex Patrick set out the problem another way:

But now there's a new dimension to the alliance with Australian taxpayers are sharing the alliance love by pouring billions into the US submarine industrial base. [...] The Royal Australian Navy will become the seventh and a half fleet of the US Navy, supported by what are being referred to as the expeditionary air operations by the Royal Australian Air Force.

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KULIN NATION AS THE CUSTODIANS OF THE LAND IN WHICH WE LIVE AND WORK
WE PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THEIR ELDERS PAST AND PRESENT
WE RECOGNISE THAT SOVEREIGNTY WAS NEVER CEDED

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