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Beyond Conspiracy Theory: US presidential archives on the Australian press, national security and the Whitlam government

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Abstract

Investigative journalists walk a fine line between being lauded as guardians of democracy and derided as “conspiracy theorists”. Those investigating the events that led to the fall of the Whitlam government in 1975 are often accused of an obsession with conspiracy, but documents from the presidential archives from the Eisenhower to Ford administrations provide evidence of the complex inter-relationship between the Australian press, security services and Whitlam’s opponents. Recent archival work clearly establishes the ready complicity of the Australian press and a role for the US National Security Council in Whitlam’s demise. Excisions from key documents on national security grounds point to the need for further investigative work before we can move beyond conspiracy theory to tell the full story of 1975.

Introduction

The distance between investigative journalism and conspiracy theory is not as large as many journalists would hope. Both start in speculation. Both assume there is a back-story that is closer to reality than the official story. Both seek to draw out facts and connections that reveal power and the abuse of power.

A conspiracy theory is any explanation of a seemingly straightforward event that relies on hidden information and claims of secret coordination and nefarious motives. Conspiracy theories generally serve a useful function in mass society, not as a realistic reflection of the world but as a kind of a pressure valve where citizens can vent their frustration that they have so little knowledge or control of the decisions that form their life chances. Mark Fenster (1999, p. 67) argues that

"just because overarching conspiracy theories are wrong does not mean they are not on to something. Specifically, they ideologically address real structural inequities, and constitute a response to a withering civil society and the concentration of the ownership of the means of production, which together leave the political subject without the ability to be recognized or to signify in the public realm."

To the disenfranchised, which is most people, the secret meetings of cabinets and boards behind closed doors seem like the perfect opportunities for powerful people in close cabals to "breathe together" which is the literal meaning of the Latin root of "conspiracy". No wonder there is a market for the speculation about half-truths that is the stock-in-trade of the conspiracy theorist. Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* shows that market can be profitable indeed.

By way of contrast, investigative journalism seeks to explain the real world by "uncovering information that has been kept from public view." (Stovall, 2005, p. 95) Journalism theorists disagree over whether investigative journalism requires original work by an individual journalist or active secrecy and evasion by powerful forces but they all tend to agree that the resulting stories should be in the public interest (Tanner 2002, pp. xx-xxiii). Thus investigative journalism is seen as a natural progression from the 'watchdog' or fourth estate functions of everyday journalism which holds democracy to account. Conspiracy theorists would make a similar claim for their activities. What differentiates investigative journalism from conspiracy theory is the quality of the evidence and the challenge for investigative journalists is to ensure that their evidence is unassailable, that it is of a high forensic standard that could be tested rationally, rigorously and scientifically in a courts of law. This paper argues that investigative journalism is marked by the strength of the proof it adduces.

Of particular interest are those moments when the weight of evidence shifts a position from conspiracy theory to common knowledge. ASIO's interest in opponents of the Liberal Party in the 50s and 60s have moved from leftist paranoia to established fact (McKnight, 1994, pp. 285-6). In the United States, government involvement in coups around the world and close surveillance of opponents at home changed from fantasy to

reality in the 70s (Hitchens, 2001; Mackenzie, 1997). Queensland in the 1980s saw claims of police and political corruption move from conspiracy theory through investigative journalism to common wisdom (Dickie, 1988). In all these cases, the shift came about as the result of the gathering of documentary evidence that established a strong forensic case.

The pre-eminent unresolved conspiracy theory that festers at the heart of the Australian body politic circulates around whether the decision made by governor-general John Kerr to dismiss the Whitlam Labor government in 1975 was influenced by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with the complicit support of Australia's defence and security services and the connivance of the Australian press. From the outset, references to CIA connections with Kerr's coup were cast as paranoid conspiracy theory. Kerr himself said with regards to allegations of his CIA connections: "I have had no direct or indirect connection at any time... with any intelligence organizations including our own. Only the more gullible subscribers to the conspiracy theory of history could believe or want to believe such nonsense." (Kerr, 1978, p. 100) A number of commentators, including journalists Alan Reid (1976) and Paul Kelly (1983), agree with Kerr that full-blown conspiracy theories lack an evidentiary basis. Even Whitlam himself refuses to be drawn into support for a conspiracy theory but he does note that President Jimmy Carter's assistant secretary of state for East Asia, Warren Christopher made a detour to Australia in 1977 to tell him: "The US administration would never again interfere in the domestic political process of Australia." (Whitlam, 1985, p. 53) Other authors, while avoiding charges of conspiracy, see a much more sinister side to Kerr's activities (Lloyd & Clark, 1976) But the actuality of conspiracy is irrelevant because once any discussion of the security dimensions of the events of 1975 is cast as conspiracy theory then it can be dismissed, because "... a majority of Australians belong to the accident (or stuff-up) school of historical explanation." (Henderson 2004)

But sweeping the CIA under the conspiracy theory rug is hardly a resolution to the matter. Thirty years on, it is timely to review the issues on the evidence and investigative journalism with its forensic standards of proof offers the opportunity to see exactly what the evidence can or cannot substantiate. By going beyond mere reporting of the official story to see whether the official story is corroborated by the facts, by putting forward evidence that can be tested by others, by scrutinising the official record to see what was spin and what was substance, investigative journalists can use historical, even scientific, methods to hold governments accountable and take the public one step closer to the truth. US presidential archives from the period are gradually becoming more available and, despite the still secret gaps in the record, they provide materials that allow us to test the strength of the cases that can be established for and against US involvement in Australia's greatest constitutional crisis. If all that can be done is to set out the complex inter-relationships of personalities, perspectives and power around these events, then investigative journalism will have done its job.

The Context

The events of 1975 have to be read against the ongoing US-Australian relationship and the crucial role of the National Security Council (NSC), the federal executive council responsible for planning, coordinating, and evaluating the defense policies of the United States and also exercising direction over the CIA. Created by the 1947 National Security Act, the NSC is chaired by the president. Its regular attendees are the vice president, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the president's national security adviser. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the statutory military advisor to the Council, and the Director of Central Intelligence is the intelligence advisor.

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/>) By National Security Decision Memorandum 40 on 17 February 1970, President Richard Nixon approved covert action operations carried out by the CIA (unless otherwise assigned by him) and approved by the 40 Committee chaired by the president's national security adviser.

With regard to US-Australia relations, the 60s saw a shift from an alliance based on common traits and aspirations to Australia's emergence as a geo-political asset. In 1961, at the transition from Eisenhower to Kennedy administrations, the NSC reported that "Australia, particularly presents an unusual affinity of attitudes with the United States (and it) is in a position to play an active and important role in promoting free world interests in Southeast Asia, the Southwest Pacific and the eastern half of the Indian Ocean." The NSC's military objectives included "plan for the availability of facilities... standardize military equipment on US models and... continue to consider, and as appropriate cooperate with Australia in, projects for military purposes in selected scientific fields." (Lay, J.S., 1961, "Note by the Executive Secretary to the National Security Council on Long-range US Policy Interests in Australia and New Zealand", NSC 6109, Box 12 NSC Registry series, Eisenhower Presidential Archives.)

This was the time of the space race and one area where Australia could assist US science was by providing bases where communications from spacecraft and satellites could be brought back to Earth. While the bases were ostensibly for scientific and space research purposes, the Australian and US governments created a mutual dependence on each other by establishing, on these bases, defence, communications and intelligence installations critical to US global strategic programs and operations. The North West Cape base established in 1963 was vital for US communications to its Indian Ocean Polaris submarine fleet (Ball 1980) but as more recent classes of subs had better communications and North West Cape was no longer required, the base has now reverted to Australian control. Of continuing significance were the satellite intelligence facilities established at Pine Gap (1966) and Nurrungar (1969) in central Australia. These facilities allowed the control and monitoring of satellites to provide a range of communication services including early warning of Chinese and Russian missile launches and nuclear explosions and also the transmission of orders and the gathering signals intelligence (SIGINT) including radio communications and phone calls across Asia and the Middle East.

This system of bases was made possible by a number of treaties relating to Space Vehicle Tracking and Communications, the Status of United States Forces in Australia and the Establishment of a United States Naval Communication Station at North West Cape signed in 1963 by the Australian Liberal Party government with Ambassador William Battle (Australian Treaty Series, 1963). "Bitter" Bill Battle commanded PT Boats in the Solomon Islands during the Second World War with John F. Kennedy (<http://www.ptboats.org/20-12-05-trivia-001.html>). Battle was a successful industrialist and lawyer, his father was Governor of Virginia and he was chairman of Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign in Virginia (http://www.jfklink.com/speeches/jfk/aug60/jfk240860_rally.html). Kennedy appointed him as Ambassador to Australia in 1962 (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/po/com/10368.htm>). Battle was instrumental in establishing the regime of US bases in Australia, their focus in both military and space affairs and with absolute freedom of access to Australia extended to all US military personnel. From this point, the bases move to the centre of the US-Australian relationship. One of the first acts of Lyndon Baines Johnson's administration (1963-9) was to join with the telecommunications industry to each provide half the cost for two 18-piece independent satellite systems capable of "world wide traffic" even after a sustained attack (Memo to President, 13 March 1964, National Security Action Memo 252, Box 2, National Security Files, Johnson Presidential Archive). For the rest of the Johnson administration, the NSC was concerned to maintain the facilities to monitor the satellites as the tenure of bases was challenged in Libya (NSAM 291), Ethiopia, Kenya (NSAM 300), Brazil, Chile (NSAM 301), Pakistan (NSAM 348) and many other places around the world.

President Richard Nixon initiated a review of US policies towards Australia and New Zealand by National Security Study Memorandum 127 on 27 May 1971. That study, in the second paragraph of its summary, under the heading US Interests and Objectives, says: "Our most direct stakes in Australia and New Zealand are: maintenance of continuing access to their territory for purposes of locating defense and scientific installations of significance to our strategic capability and space program". Deeper in the report specific US interests and objectives with relation to Australia are enunciated as "installations contributing to our strategic deterrence capability...surveillance in the East Asia and Pacific/Indian Ocean areas...support base area in case of general hostilities with a major power..." and then a seven-line paragraph that is still excised from the document when the rest was declassified in 1996 (NSSM 127, 27 May 1971, Box 183, NSC Institutional Files, Nixon Presidential Archive). Further excisions are made in the background annex to the report with regard to US facilities and installations in Australia which is passing strange as similar information had been made available in the Australian parliament as early as 1969 by Prime Minister John Gorton in response to the Opposition leader, Gough Whitlam (*Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (H of R)* 9 September 1969, pp. 1010-12).

The Whitlam Government's First Mistake

On 2 December 1972, Gough Whitlam led the Australian Labor Party into federal government for the first time in 23 years. He promised a more independent foreign policy stance than his conservative predecessors and had already established relations with communist China while in opposition with a visit in July 1971, a visit that was legitimated when it was later revealed that the US President's envoy, Henry Kissinger had secretly been in China at the same time as Whitlam and Nixon himself visited China six months later (<http://www.abc.net.au/ra/news/timelines/s1385451.htm>).

There is nothing in the archives to suggest that the United States was in any way involved in the 1972 election. In fact Kissinger told Whitlam: "Our instructions to our Embassy as regards the election last December were to keep hands off." (HAK Memorandum of Conversation, 30 July 1973 10-11am, Box 1027, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Archive). The US attitude changed quickly after the election when Australian front benchers Jim Cairns, Clyde Cameron and Tom Uren criticised renewed bombing of Hanoi just before Christmas 1972. Whitlam exacerbated the situation by sending a letter to Nixon suggesting "that he will approach other Asian governments to make a joint appeal to Washington and Hanoi to resume negotiations" (Memo from Winston Lord, 20 December 1972, CO10 Australia, WHC Files, Nixon Presidential Archive).

Kissinger's phone call to the US Embassy in Canberra barely contains the anger emanating from the White House: "If you could convey that we are not particularly amused being put by an ally on the same level as our enemy and to have an appeal equally addressed to us and North Vietnam, I must tell you it's not the way to start a relationship with us... So, I don't think we are going to reply to this message. I've just talked to the President about it... But we still hope to have the closest relationships with your government. But this is not an official communication... such an act taken publicly (releasing the letter) would really not have very good consequences... (Kissinger to Charge d'Affaires, US Embassy, Australia, 3.25pm, 20 December 1972, Box 17, HAK Telcons, Nixon Presidential Archive).

This shift in the tenor of US-Australian relations had ramifications in the world of media that reverberated all the way through to 1975. On 4 January 1973, Nixon got a memo from his Communications Director, Herbert G. Klein to say that Sir Frank Packer, father of Kerry and then managing director and major share-holder of Australian Consolidated Press, had sent his New York representative "to express to you (Nixon) his (Packer's) personal support and that of his magazines and his television network." Packer's message was that he understood Nixon's motivation in bombing Hanoi, that he was "disturbed" by Whitlam's comments and that the majority of Australian's did not share Whitlam's views. Of greatest concern is Klein's claim that Packer's representative "...offered you (Nixon) any use you may like of his magazines and network." (Memo from Herbert G. Klein, 4 January 1973, CO10 Australia, WHC Files, Nixon Presidential Archive). Packer's voluntary acquiescence to the US shows how the Australian press

did not need to be part of a conspiracy to do the bidding of the United States. The Packer empire were willing collaborators before the US even conceived of using them. As Klein said in his memo to Nixon: "I declined (offers of help) at this time." In the event, when John Kerr installed Liberal leader Malcolm Fraser as Prime Minister in 1975, one of Fraser's first calls was to Kerry Packer who immediately went to Canberra to give the caretaker prime minister "a great deal of moral support" both then and during the rest of the election campaign (Barry, 1993, p. 212).

Whitlam Meets Nixon

The Whitlam government's relationship with the United States never really recovered from this poor start and the relationship was further exacerbated by Attorney-General, Lionel Murphy's raid on ASIO in March 1973. Murphy was seen in Washington as a communist sympathiser and it was felt his raid endangered secrets shared between ASIO and the CIA. However Nixon did agree to a meeting with Whitlam in July 1973. Kissinger's brief to Nixon said the primary purpose of the meeting was "to restore the level of confidence between our two governments at the highest level that existed before the Whitlam government took office." (Kissinger, HA, "Meeting with the Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam" Memorandum 4172, CO10 Australia, WHC Files, Nixon Presidential Archive). Whitlam had earned the meeting because he had muted criticism of Nixon's Asian policies, praised détente but primarily because "he has defended out defense installations in Australia against attack from his party's left wing." Kissinger's briefing also mentioned Whitlam's problems with the Senate before finally discussing "US Defense Installations in Australia: No Substantial Change in Prospect" and noting that Whitlam modified his position "after being briefed on the functions of these facilities" and turned debate at the recent party conference away from vital installations and on to the "less important" Omega navigation system. The briefing says that Pine Gap and Nurrungar merely monitor adherence to arms limitations agreements and missile developments in China and Russia. The briefing also holds out promise of "cosmetic changes" to give the impression of Australian control at North West Cape. It is interesting to note that in this, the official story for Whitlam, there is no mention of the bases' information gathering or even command functions.

In the lead up to Whitlam's meeting with Nixon, Kissinger met with the recently appointed US Ambassador to Australia, Marshall Green, a career diplomat who had been ambassador to Indonesia 1965-69 during the overthrow of the Sukarno government. He told Kissinger: "I would define US interests in Australia as: (1) preserving our defense installations; (2) maintaining our investment and trade there..." (HAK Memorandum of Conversation, 28 July 1973, Prime Minister Whitlam's Coming Visit, Box 1027, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Archive) When Kissinger met Whitlam just before their meeting with Nixon, Kissinger summarises the situation: "We do not see recent changes in Australia as a greater assertion of Australian autonomy. Rather we look at it as a change in some of the mechanics in our relations... We can't deny that we have had some strains recently - but we consider these matters of the past." (HAK

Memorandum of Conversation 30 July 1973 10-11am, Box 1027, Nixon Presidential Archive). Neither the bases nor investment and trade were brought up by either side. Whitlam expressed an interest in talking with Nixon about French nuclear testing in the Pacific but the most striking thing is his nervousness about meeting Nixon. He told Kissinger: "I'm not particularly inhibited, but I'm afraid I might freeze up with him." Because of legal issues emanating from the Watergate break-in, Nixon had stopped taping conversations before he met Whitlam and the printed archives show no evidence of any memorandum of their conversation. Nevertheless, as relations between Australia and the US appear to have stabilized following the meeting, certainly at the leadership level, one might assume that both sides did agree to leave the past behind them.

The Nixon-Ford Transition

After the double dissolution election in May 1974, left-winger Jim Cairns was elected as Whitlam's deputy and this sent shock-waves through Washington as they realized that one of Australia's staunchest critics of US foreign policy was a heartbeat away from the Prime Ministership. The future of the bases was again in question and Nixon and Kissinger took time out from the management of the Watergate debacle and the disengagement from Vietnam to issue National Security Study Memorandum 204 to the Departments of State and Defense and the CIA on 1 July 1974.

NSSM 204 notes "recent changes in the Labor Government" and says "The study should examine the impact of these changes on basic US objectives toward Australia, particularly in the political-security area." The memo calls for more than theoretical analysis: "It should define and evaluate policy options for giving effect to the resulting objectives." In particular the memo called for study of issues around "keeping US defense installations in Australia... relocating essential existing US security functions outside Australia... locating additional US functions in Australia and the policy options for trying to do so." (NSSM 204, 1 July 1974, Box 205, NSC Institutional Files, Nixon Presidential Archive). Other issues to be addressed by the report continue to be classified. The memo gave the NSC Interdepartmental Group for East Asia only two weeks to prepare the report. The report remains classified. Nixon resigned from office on 8 August 1974, so it is possible that one of his last acts in office was to establish new policy objectives with regard to Australia but there is no evidence in the archive that this was the case.

The archival record is silent on how these new policy objectives were implemented, completely silent. With the advent of Gerald Ford's administration, no further national security studies or decisions about Australia are evident in the archives. Whitlam called for a meeting with Ford that was held on 5 October 1974 and briefings for that meeting emphasise Whitlam's acceptance of US bases. US Ambassador to Australia, Marshall Green reports "...there would be no move by an Australian government to terminate these facilities as long as Labor was headed by Whitlam..." There was concern about Jim Cairns: "Once in the top position he (Cairns) would probably veer... towards a

foreign policy based on neutrality and the removal of American bases from Australian shores." (Green, M, Telexes 21/30 September 1974, Box 2, NSA-Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, Ford Presidential Archive) Kissinger's briefing for Ford pointed out that Whitlam was mellowing with regard to the US bases as he understood their significance for arms limitations but in the event the bases did not come up in their conversation which covered LBJ, their war service, general discussion of Indonesia, Pierre Trudeau and their children (Memcon, President's Meeting with Australian Prime Minister Whitlam, 5 October 1974, Box 6, NSA Memcons, Ford Presidential Archive). Kissinger's briefing for this meeting does contain the promise to Ford: "I will forward to you shortly for your decision an inter-agency policy options study on these installations and on US policy toward Australia generally." (HAK, Meeting with Australian Prime Minister Whitlam, 4 October 1974, Box 1, NSA-Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, Ford Presidential Archive) There is no evidence of this report so it is impossible to know whether if Kissinger was still working on the report ordered by Nixon or a development of it.

The Conspiracy and the Coup

Whether for personal, political or commercial reasons, by late 1974 Rupert Murdoch was turning against the Whitlam Government (Stockwell, 1995). Murdoch had taken a close interest in the 1972 Labor campaign and "sat in as virtual editorial director of his group of papers. He coordinated policy, dictated news stories, gave advice to the Whitlam camp and generally worked a twelve-hour day making sure that advice was used to the best advantage in his own editorials." (Regan, 1976:97). In November 1974 the Governor-General, John Kerr paid Murdoch a visit at Cavan, his farm near Canberra. It was Kerr who explained to Murdoch the problems Whitlam might have with Supply if his hold on the Senate weakened and Kerr gave a broad reading to his reserve powers (Munster, 1985:106).

It is interesting to note that the next two documents in the archives relating to Australia are telexes to the Governor General expressing condolences to the people of Darwin after they were hit by a cyclone and greetings for Australia Day. (Ford, GR Telexes 27 December 1974/10 January 1975, Box 7, WHCF Subject Files, Ford Presidential Archive). Direct communication between the US President and the Australian Governor-General is rare in the archives and these two telexes suggest that the United States was playing up to Kerr's view of himself as Head of State with broad powers. Later in January, Kissinger writes to Green querying how Whitlam will handle the bases issue at the ALP conference. Kissinger notes that Whitlam knows the bases "play a vital role in détente and strategic arms limitations agreements" though further comments are excised. (HAK, Telex to Green, 25 January 1975, Box 2, NSA-Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, Ford Presidential Archive) Whitlam kept discussion off the US bases by turning his attention to the economic and political challenges facing the party.

Whitlam had a final meeting with Ford on 7 May 1975, just a week after the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War. Whitlam was conciliatory on Indochina, offering assistance with reconstruction and refugees. He was concerned about the build up of US and Soviet naval forces in the Indian Ocean but on the bases he has no complaints, highlighting the part they had to play in building peace: "It is a contribution we thought we could make to balance the feeling of détente you and the soviets have developed. This could have been an issue in Australia but it has been entirely defused... They will trust my judgment." (Ingersoll, Telex to US Embassy, 21 May 1975, Box 4, NSA-Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, Ford Presidential Archive) It is striking how little there is in the Presidential archives about Australia in the year 1975. Between Kissinger's January telex to Green re the ALP conference and a telex from Kissinger to the US Embassy in Australia congratulating Malcolm Fraser on his 13 December election victory there is just documentation with regard to the May Whitlam-Ford meeting and a memo in November declining to appoint an ambassador during the Australian election campaign. There was correspondence at a lower level with regard to a meeting between Ford and then opposition leader Fraser during 1975 that was not included into presidential files until 1976. The significance of this documentation is discussed below.

Much has been written about the events of 1975 from pro- and anti-conspiracy points of view (see Pilger, 1990 and Kelly, 1995 respectively). There is evidence from Christopher Boyce, a US transmissions clerk responsible for sending and receiving material to and from Pine Gap, that there was infiltration of unions and deception to the detriment of the Whitlam government and that a senior officer had referred to the Governor-General as "our man Kerr" (Martin, 1982). It also appears that freelance agents with connections to US naval intelligence unit Task Force 157 were active in creating and planting documents that were at the heart of the "loans affair", a futile effort to raise funds from the Middle East that led Deputy Prime Minister Jim Cairns and Minerals and Energy Minister Rex Connor misleading parliament and resigning from the Ministry (James, 1982, pp. 174-178). Connor's resignation precipitated the blocking of supply by the Senate on 15 October 1975.

Once supply was blocked Rupert Murdoch's media interests offered vigorous support for Whitlam's overthrow. Front-page articles from *The Australian* show the role it played in promoting the Liberal's strategy: 18 October "Governor-General will act soon, says Fraser", 20 October "Fraser says Kerr must sack Whitlam", 24 October "Fraser accuses PM and says he must go" and October 27 "Whitlam acts like dictator - Fraser". At the time John Menadue was Permanent Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department and he has revealed that Murdoch knew the details of Fraser's plan for the dismissal down to Menadue's fate: he was to become Ambassador to Japan (SMH, 4 Nov 1995, p. 1). Murdoch claims he has no memory of these discussions with Menadue (Kelly, 1995, p. 244).

After the fall of Nixon in August 1974 and Saigon in April 1975, there was a high degree of instability in the United States and Australia and in relations between the two

governments. The second half of 1975 saw the end of Marshall Green's tenure as US ambassador to Australia on 31 July. There was no replacement until February 1976. ASIO chief Barbour was sacked in September. ASIS chief Robertson was sacked on 22 October. CIA chief William Colby was sacked on 2 November. On that very day, Whitlam went public with the claim of a close relationship between leader of the National Party, Doug Anthony and Richard Stallings, the American who had founded Pine Gap and whom Whitlam had just learnt was a CIA agent (McKnight, 1994, pp. 293-4). If Stallings was CIA then Whitlam concluded that Pine Gap had much broader espionage uses than just monitoring nuclear and missile tests uses. Whitlam was astounded that the US had misled him and offended that he had been duped into misleading his party. The US was concerned that Whitlam was revealing the identities of CIA agents and warned ASIO that this could lead to a breakdown of their intelligence cooperation and information sharing arrangements. On 9 November Kerr was briefed on the US threat to break off intelligence relations (Clark, 2000) and shortly thereafter, just before Whitlam was due to address the Parliament on Stallings, the CIA and Pine Gap, Kerr used the denial of supply as the trigger to dismiss the Whitlam government on 11 November 1975.

Conclusion: Victory Has Many Fathers

Recent work in the Gerald Ford presidential archives has uncovered clear evidence that the National Security Council, the body responsible for exercising control over the CIA, was active with regard to Australia in 1975. Their activities are revealed not by a "smoking gun" document ordering the destabilisation of an ally and the destruction of a properly elected government but rather in the bureaucratic argy bargy over how to celebrate their victory.

The correspondence commences not in the national security files but in the White House correspondence file with a memo to Presidential Counsellor, Jack Marsh from his assistant Russ Rourke about a call from Bill Battle, US ambassador to Australia 1962-4 and the man who signed off on the regime of bases in Australia. Bill called to express an interest in joining "any US delegation that might be sent to Australia with the ascendance of Malcolm Fraser." Rourke writes in "If you want me to look into this w/ NSC, please advise." Marsh responds in hand writing: "Explore with caution. Some political fall out possible with Battle which could be adverse M" (Rourke to Marsh, 18 December 1975, C010 Australia, Box 7, WHCF Subject Files, Ford Presidential Archive). Rourke writes again at the end of the month to report that there will be no "full-blown ceremony" and that the cabinet was sworn in at a "quiet" ceremony on 23 December. The NSC regrets (and one cannot but read a note of sarcasm into their response to Battle) the missed opportunity for the Fraser government to enjoy "the obvious affection that would have been lavished on it by the US..." Rourke undertakes to give Battle a status report. (Rourke to Marsh, 31 December 1975, C010 Australia, Box 7, WHCF Subject Files, Ford Presidential Archive)

Attached at this point is a raft of correspondence from mid-1975 about an aborted attempt to arrange a meeting between president Ford and then opposition leader Malcolm Fraser. On 23 May Jack Marsh had written to National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft that Bill Battle was requesting a meeting between Fraser and Ford between 23 June and 4 July. The NSC was obviously not happy with this intervention and Deputy National Security Adviser WR Smyser required a "detailed breakdown" of Rourke's contacts with Battle. Rourke then notes: "I went to great lengths to advise Smyser that, under no circumstances, did we have any intention of crossing into NSC's obvious jurisdiction..." (Rourke to Marsh, 28 May 1975, C010 Australia, Box 7, WHCF Subject Files, Ford Presidential Archive) This is the clearest yet indication that the NSC considered that it had a jurisdiction with regard to Australia in 1975. This off-handed comment, and Rourke and Marsh's haste in abdicating the area, indicate the breadth of the NSC's jurisdiction.

From the above we could conclude with McKnight (1994, p. 294) that "the plausibility of CIA intervention in Australia from 1973 to 1975 is very high (but) no one has yet proved that the Central Intelligence Agency played a role in the crises of 1974 to 1975 which preceded the dismissal of the Whitlam government." What can be said with regard to the 1975 Dismissal with some certainty is that US intelligence services, Australian media and the Liberal opposition had common interests in provoking the fall of the Whitlam government. There is no evidence of any meetings or connivance between all these parties to that end but the archival and analytical work reported in this paper makes it clear that:

- (1) The Packer empire had put their media interests at the service of the United States and Rupert Murdoch received a briefing from Kerr before taking an active editorial line against Whitlam;
- (2) President Nixon ordered the NSC to do something more than produce policy options to hold current, and create new, US defense installations in Australia; and
- (3) White House staff considered that the NSC did have a jurisdiction in Australia in 1975 and that US security services were active in promoting the dismissal of the Whitlam government.

Further investigation of presently excised portions of the Nixon and Ford archives will reveal more about the events of 1975 when they are declassified. The author's applications for the review of classification of documents in these archives are presently being considered.

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