The U.S. – Australian Intelligence Sharing Relationship

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This essay provides a précis of the U.S.-Australian intelligence relationship, beginning with the UKUSA agreements after WWII and continuing through the Joint Defense Space Research Facility, South American regime changes, the CIA in Australia, the first Gulf War, and Afghanistan and Iraq. Examination is also afforded the legal obstacles of U.S. national disclosure policies that were overcome under the Bush-Howard alliance as well as the benefits and disadvantages of the growing bilateral relationship. The conclusion, “What’s Next?”, succinctly outlines what will drive the relationship from both sides in the next four years. A majority of the sources are primary government officials from both countries, official government documents, government hearings, and press releases from relevant agencies.
HISTORY OF THE INTELLIGENCE RELATIONSHIP

Following World War II, it was very evident the sharing of signals intelligence (SIGINT) had contributed greatly to an Allied Victory. Recognizing this, when the United Kingdom chose to reorganize and refine its signals intelligence establishments in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada following the war, the United States found it an apt time to formalize a SIGINT sharing agreement among the five English-speaking nations that would maximize these intelligence capabilities in the future. This agreement became known as the UKUSA Security Agreement—the United Kingdom and United States of America Security Agreement. Formalized in the Atlantic Charter, the UKUSA agreements are the most important and most secret intelligence agreements ever reached, and may prove to be the most important security agreements in the post-WWII world.\(^1\) These agreements marked the beginning of an intelligence sharing relationship between the United States and Australia that would continue for over 60 years and prove enormously beneficial to the security of both nations.

Under UKUSA, each participating nation was designated a different region of the world on which to focus its signals collection efforts. The United States turned an ear toward Latin America, Asiatic Russia and northern China while Australia focused on South East Asia, Indo-China, Mainland China, and the South Pacific nations. Canada supplemented the United States and focused on Russia, New Zealand observed the Indian Ocean, and the U.K. absorbed European and North African traffic. It was UKUSA that served as the impetus for a joint U.S.-Australia signals intelligence facility just north of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory that

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would become the backbone of the American-Australian intelligence relationship. The facility was known as Pine Gap.

Announced to the public as nothing more than a “joint venture” in December of 1966, Australia and the U.S. purported that no military activity would occur at Pine Gap and signed a secret Executive Agreement to share intelligence collected at the facility. Designed to complement Britain’s Menwith Hill, Pine Gap was built to serve as another action arm for signals collection and missile launch detection as the Cold War was coming to a boil. Fully operational by 1970, the base originally employed 25 Americans and 60 Australians and harnessed the technological expertise of the Collins Radio Company of Dallas, Texas.² Today, Pine Gap is believed to employ over 1,000 people, including many from the United States’ National Security Agency (NSA) and the United Kingdom’s Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ).

With the UKUSA partnership and the construction of Pine Gap came the development of an intricate, operational agreement on a collection-and-analysis project for sigint known as ECHELON [esh-uh-lon]. Operated on behalf of the state signatories to UKUSA, ECHELON is the software system that Pine Gap had been built to employ.³ Capable of the interception and content-inspection of telephone calls, faxes, e-mails and other global data traffic, it gathered these communications from satellite transmissions, public switched telephone networks—which carry most Internet traffic—and microwave signals.⁴ The system worked by indiscriminately intercepting very large quantities of communications and using computers to identify and extract

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² The History of Pine Gap, From the Beginning to the Present. [http://roswell.fortunecity.com/callanish/129/pinegap_history.htm](http://roswell.fortunecity.com/callanish/129/pinegap_history.htm)
messages of interest based on pre-programmed keywords.\(^5\) In the early 1980s, the technology to network all ECHELON computers in the world became available. The network, known as PLATFORM, was finally able to link together Menwith, Pine Gap, and a chain of other secret interception facilities around the world. With more signatories joining the UKUSA agreement in the decades following WWII, ECHELON has today become the largest [known], most advanced intelligence sharing network in the world and remains a crux of the U.S.-Australian intelligence relationship.

UKUSA may have been the formal beginning of an intelligence relationship between the Land of Opportunity and the Lucky Country, but it was certainly not the last. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the United States became increasingly concerned about the socialist Chilean government led by president Salvador Allende. Unable to function in Chile under the Allende government, the CIA again looked to the Aussies for assistance. It was the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS\(^6\)) that served as the conduit to Augusto Pinochet for the CIA in the early ‘70s. Actively supporting Pinochet as he ascended to Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean army, the CIA leveraged Pinochet to use the Navy, Air Force and national police force of Chile to overthrow the Allende government in 1973 and establish a military dictatorship that was more in sync with Western political and economic philosophies. Without the willingness and ability of ASIS to operate covertly in Chile, collect and disseminate intelligence to CIA, and run sources on behalf of the Agency,\(^7\) the 1973 coup d’état would neither have been possible nor successful.

\(^6\) The Australian Secret Intelligence Service. Australia’s overseas secret HUMINT (human intelligence) collection agency.
\(^7\) The Agency is used to denote CIA.
By the mid-1970s the Australian-American intelligence relationship really began to solidify, both in policy and in practice. With Pine Gap operational for almost five years, the value of the information it was collecting on the Soviets during this period of the Cold War cannot be overstated. In addition to this, Australian security and intelligence services had developed an impressive track record of working with the Americans to thwart communist influences around the globe, notably in the United States’ South American backyard. Embracing the virtue of a growing relationship, it was no surprise that top U.S. government and intelligence officials became concerned when Australian Labor Party leader Gough Whitlam was elected Prime Minister in late 1972. As a fastidious Labor Party politician, a party which paralleled American Democrats, Whitlam was dedicated to social reform, advocated pulling Australia out of Vietnam, and aggressively looked for evidence of misdemeanor against the right-wing ethics of CIA and the U.S. administration.\(^8\) It was quite obvious the alarm bells were ringing back in Washington in 1973 when, for the first time, the President dispatched a career diplomat to Australia to ensure the bi-lateral relationship would not be tossed onto the ash heap of history.\(^9\)

While some in CIA recognized it would not be easy to strengthen, let alone expand, the intelligence relationship under the Whitlam government, many also feared it would quickly come to end and thirty years of investment and development would go up in smoke. These fears stemmed from one reality: the lease of Pine Gap would come up for renewal during Whitlam’s Ministership and, given both his rhetoric and legislation in the first few weeks, concerns that Pine Gap’s lease would not be renewed were very real. The interruption could not have come at a worse time. The United States was politically and militarily consumed with the Vietnam War,

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and communication intercepts from China, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Laotian Pathet Lao, and the Khmer Rouge were surely playing an influential role in U.S. wartime policy. To lose its most acute hearing during the longest war of its history was not an option for the United States.

Tolerance for Gough Whitlam officially ended in CIA in 1974 when Whitlam publicly declared that Richard Stallings was both a CIA operative in Australia and that he had been in charge of the Pine Gap installation. Pine Gap had been such a sensitive project that it was not until Whitlam’s announcement that most senior ranking intelligence officials within Australia learned Pine Gap was a CIA operation. In addition to this, Whitlam also publicly demanded a list of all CIA agents operating in Australia. At that point, Ted Shackley, a senior CIA official and Task Force 157 member,\textsuperscript{10} accused Whitlam of being a security risk for the United States and sent the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) a memorandum demanding ASIO do something about it.\textsuperscript{11} Conveniently, Whitlam head been mired in domestic political strife beginning in October of 1975 and on November 11, 1975, the day after the Shackley Cable was sent to ASIO, Governor-General John Kerr dismissed the Whitlam government on a parliamentary technicality. Liberal Party member John Malcolm Fraser, a party that parallels American conservative thought, assumed the Prime Ministership after Whitlam and CIA once again began to breathe easy.

As the Vietnam War ended and the Cold War continued, it was a salvaged relationship that would again gain momentum quickly. In 1989, Pine Gap was declassified and most of its

\textsuperscript{10} The purpose of Task Force 157 seems to have been two-fold. It was set up to both run operations against the Whitlam government and to use Australia as a base for certain clandestine operations that included arms dealing and smuggling of contraband goods. (Source: Jerry Aaron, former CIA operative, co-author of \textit{Rooted in Secrecy}. Five-Part Radio Interview, Public Radio News Service, Melbourne, Australia; Part I. October-November 1986.)

operations became public knowledge. It was renamed the Joint Defence Space Research Facility and, by early 1990, with the Soviet Union quickly dissolving, it may have seemed that Pine Gap—and thus the U.S.-Australian intelligence relationship—was becoming outmoded. Before anyone could give it a second thought, however, Saddam Hussein’s Republican Guard invaded Kuwait. In 1991, U.S. newspapers reported that Pine Gap was both instrumental in tracking Iraq’s SCUD missiles and setting the guidance and trajectory for U.S. PATRIOT missiles. Numerous press reports also indicated that satellite imagery (SATINT; satellite intelligence) from Pine Gap was essential in monitoring the troop movements and military activity of the Republican Guard during the first Gulf War. In addition to sharing SATINT, as a coalition partner during Desert Storm, Australia received military intelligence from the United States regarding the explosive naval countermeasures employed by Iraq and was assigned the duty of de-mining Kuwait’s port facilities at the end of the war. As the United States’ longest wartime ally—participating in Vietnam when even the United Kingdom would not—Australia had again proved itself a worthy and trustable partner in wartime intelligence sharing and working alongside the U.S. in military operations. It was a track record that would set the stage for the twenty-first century and, after the terrorist attacks of 2001, help catalyze one of the strongest political and military alliances in American history.


Regardless of how strong the U.S.-Australia partnership had become in the half-century after World War II, Australia was still a separate, sovereign nation, and, as such, was still only privy to select, relevant pieces of U.S. intelligence. U.S. national disclosure policies, which had been in effect since the republic’s inception, shrouded U.S. intelligence with a legal and political

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framework that had very little precedent for flexibility—save the very limited sharing with coalition partners during wartime, which could be counted on one hand. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent Global War on Terrorism, however, marked the beginning of a new era in the American-Australian alliance. A political ally quickly became a close, personal friend.

Australian Prime Minister John Winston Howard, of Australia’s conservative Liberal Party, was in the U.S. during the attacks and saw first-hand the shock, outrage and sudden vulnerability which the Americans felt.\footnote{Sheridan, 98.} It was an experience that would drive him to invoke the ANZUS Treaty for the first time in its history. The invocation, and, thus, subsequent pledge of full Australian and New Zealand assistance, made it very clear to President Bush that Howard’s commitment to the new presidential administration and the American people was more than a diplomatic friendship rooted in history. It was the quality of a true-blue cobber who would stand beside his mate at all costs, fighting a fight which both believed needed to be fought—which both knew needed to be won.

In keeping with their historical record, when the United States invaded Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban, Australian diggers\footnote{A colloquial term used to denote ‘soldiers’.} and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) joined the invasion as part of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations. Australia’s participation would be codenamed Operation SLIPPER. The sharing of relevant operational, military intelligence began again as Australia dispatched approximately 300 SAS special forces troops, air-to-air refueling tankers, Navy frigates, F/A-18 fighter aircraft and two
Orion electronic intelligence gathering aircraft.\textsuperscript{15} Introducing a new element into the intelligence sharing relationship, it was Operation SLIPPER that dawned a new era. With the genesis of the International Coalition Against Terror (ICAT) in 2002 came the most expansive nuance of the U.S.-Australia partnership in its history: the sharing of counter-terrorism intelligence. For Bush and Howard, it was a mutually-welcomed layer of security, strategy, and, most importantly, trust atop an already impressive foundation of operational military intelligence.

When Australia—read Prime Minister Howard—readily joined the Coalition of the Willing to invade Iraq in 2003, the mission became unprecedentedly more difficult. Joint military operations became indistinguishably merged with counter-terrorism actions and demarcating both the relevance and need for the sharing of certain intelligence with coalition partners spiraled into a logistical nightmare. When, due to compartmentalization and U.S. national disclosure policies, Australian Defence Forces (ADF) were not even allowed to participate in operational briefings for which Australians had gathered the intelligence, ADF command protested to U.S. military leaders in Washington; a change was necessary. The Australian Special Air Service (SAS) regiment had gone into action in Iraq straight away in 2003. Engaging the enemy almost as soon as it entered Iraqi territory, the SAS moved at lightning speed through nearly all hostile engagements, knocked out Iraq’s air force and took control of vast chunks of territory.\textsuperscript{16} Upon hearing Australia’s concerns, it was this contributory success early-on that made one decision for President Bush very easy to make. In July 2004, President Bush signed a directive supported by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and acting Central Intelligence Agency Director John McLaughlin stipulating that laws preventing foreign


\textsuperscript{16} Sheridan, 19.
powers from seeing highly-classified intelligence would no longer apply to Australia and Britain when they were planning for combat operations, training with the Americans, or engaged in counter-terrorism activities.\textsuperscript{17}

It was a one-page Executive Order to the U.S. Department of Defense and Central Intelligence Agency that would alter, by presidential directive, the history of U.S. national disclosure policy. The directive instructed them to upgrade intelligence cooperation and access for the Australians to the status of Intelligence Partner. Intelligence Partner is the highest rank the U.S. has in the world, and from that day forward the Australians were to have access to virtually everything in the American intelligence system that concerned international terrorism and joint military operations.\textsuperscript{18}

It was a decision that would not come without resistance from U.S. intelligence agencies. In fact, the Bush administration did not even consult congressional leaders or the highly trusted levels of the congressional intelligence committees.\textsuperscript{19} These were non-starters for President Bush. The close political relationship between Bush and Howard had turned into a close personal friendship, and John had told George he needed greater access if the war on terror was going to be won in every corner of the planet. In President Bush’s eyes, his Executive Order channeled the mantra of the great Pharaoh Ramses played by Yul Brynner in \textit{The Ten Commandments}, denoting, “So let it be written; so let it be done.” However, while the President may have told Prime Ministers Blair and Howard about the directive, saying, “I've just signed something out, problem solved,” it was evident the problems were just beginning.\textsuperscript{20}

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\item Sheridan, 97.
\item Sheridan, 109.
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Prime Minister Howard was forced to intervene a second time some months later when it became clear the U.S. military was still dodging the order, despite the behest of the White House. Frank Miller, chair of the Executive Steering Group for Iraq, also discovered that instead of giving the Australians access to the intelligence database, known as SIPRNET, the Pentagon simply created a new, separate SIPRNET for them. The SIPRNET had years of information stored on it, and the U.S. military simply did not want to give it to the Australians. It could take years to sort and comb through it all. The president's orders were to put the British and Australians on the real SIPRNET, not create a new version for them. The problem dragged on and months later it was not fixed.\(^21\) Howard contacted Bush again.

“The point I made was that the commitment the President gave to me had to be delivered... That's why I intervened, and I am now advised the flows are occurring that are meant to occur... There is always a degree of inter-agency jealousy about anybody having access to these things, even very close allies, and it did take a lot of pushing. Even the President doesn't always get what he wants straight away.”\(^22\)

By late 2006, it appeared as though everything was working as intended. Bush and Howard spoke and met regularly on topics that ranged from vacation plans to trade agreements and, at virtually every face-to-face meeting, discussed intelligence cooperation between their forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.\(^23\) It was a cooperation that proved so successful and mutually beneficial that the intelligence relationship began to evolve again, expanding beyond joint military operations and counter-terrorism into the realms of transnational crime.

THE BENEFITS OF SHARING: BEYOND WAR, BEYOND THE MIDDLE EAST

As Operation SLIPPER in Afghanistan began in late 2001, Australia was also on the verge of launching an expansive policing network in the South Pacific. In 2002, the Australian

\(^{21}\) Woodward, pp. 318-19.
\(^{23}\) Sheridan, 98.
Federal Police (AFP), through its Law Enforcement Cooperation Program, established the Transnational Crime Units in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea.\(^{24}\)

Transnational Crime Units (TCUs) are structured and staffed to deal with crimes such as drug smuggling, human trafficking, arms trafficking, counterfeiting, identity theft and terrorism. By 2004, TCU’s capacity to undertake complex criminal investigations within each country had led to extraordinary intelligence collection capabilities. Working ever more closely with the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO)—Australia’s domestic intelligence organization designed to identify and investigate threats to Australian security, wherever they arise\(^{25}\)—AFP and ASIO found it necessary to create a Transnational Crime Coordination Center to provide a 24-hour point of contact for collaboration with state and overseas police forces as well as their intelligence services.\(^{26}\)

With United States’ and Australian intelligence services virtually hand-in-glove on counter-terrorism and transnational threats by late 2004, it was a prime opportunity for the United States to benefit from the criminal intelligence being collected from the Pacific Transnational Crime Network. That goal quickly became a reality. The AFP forged a relationship with the United States’ Hawaii-based Department of Defense Joint Interagency Task Force West (JIATF West) in 2004 to create a more proactive criminal intelligence and

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\(^{24}\) Henshaw, Ciara. *Strengthening the rule of law in the Pacific through international crime cooperation.* Legal Officer, Department of the Attorney General, Australia. Presentation to ANU Centre for International and Public Law conference. 2007.


investigative presence in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{27} When a TCU was established in The Federated States of Micronesia, AFP provided $300,000 of equipment and support, intelligence training, and advisors while JIATF West—read the United States—contributed another $450,000 to the project for office buildings, computer and communications equipment and air conditioning.\textsuperscript{28} The dissemination of criminal intelligence became yet another facet of the U.S.-Australian intelligence sharing relationship.

By 2008, the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Center (PTCCC), now headquartered in Suva, Fijii, was the central hub for a complex network of TCU and international law enforcement agencies. The Pacific region intelligence partners included TCUs in Micronesia, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands, local law enforcement agencies from almost all party states, national law enforcement entities—including New Zealand Police (NZPOL), the Australian Federal Police (AFP), FBI, DEA, USCG, and ICE—and state intelligence services.

The Pacific Transnational Crime Network yielded the development of model legislation\textsuperscript{29} that included the formation of Combined Law Agency Groups (CLAGS) and, most relevantly, the Pacific Financial Intelligence Unit Project in 2005.\textsuperscript{30} Since its inception, the PFIU has been working with Pacific countries to establish systems to combat terrorist financing and money
laundering. Following the attacks of 2001, the United States took aggressive measures to undercut the financial networks of terrorist organizations around the globe—notably Al Qaeda, who had ties to Indonesia in the South Pacific. With an expanding intelligence relationship, the Pacific Financial Intelligence Unit Project became another opportunity for the U.S. to receive intelligence on terrorist financial networks from Australia.

A complement to the PFIU was AUSTRAC, the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre. Although originally created in 1998, it was the Anti Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism Financing Act of 2006 (AML/CTF Act) that redefined AUSTRAC in a way that would make it an asset to the U.S.-Australian intelligence sharing relationship. Under the AML/CTF Act, AUSTRAC was mandated to assist its counterpart agencies in South East Asia to build anti money laundering and counter-terrorism financing capacities through a range of initiatives. In early 2007 AUSTRAC began working with counterparts in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, Brunei, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines; this was in addition to the Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu and New Zealand. When these relationships were coupled with AUSTRAC’s Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United States, which plugged AUSTRAC into the U.S. Treasury’s Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), AUSTRAC became yet another outlet from which the United States received intelligence on terrorist financial networks. The MoU opened a new window of information to the U.S. financial intelligence community, especially for agencies like the Department of Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control—which expanded sanctions against

32 Ibid.
Burma, officially the Union of Myanmar, in late 2007 and again in early 2008. While the intricacies of how much and what financial intelligence are not open source information, the record of the United States freezing assets of organizations in the South Pacific that have terrorist extensions is indicative of a growing financial relationship with regional partners. This facet of the intelligence sharing relationship has been a direct result of both United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 of 2001, which called upon states to "find ways of intensifying and accelerating the exchange of operational information, especially regarding actions or movements of terrorist persons or networks", and the Bush directive of 2004. The former was the foundation; the latter was the cornerstone.

Australia has benefited greatly from the intelligence sharing relationship as well. Australia’s Defence Intelligence Group (DIG), which consists of the Defence Intelligence Organisation (DIO), the Defence Signals Directorate (DSD) and the Defence Imagery and Geospatial Organisation (DIGO), is both a key player in the strategic relationship with the U.S. and a major beneficiary of that relationship. As early as February 2004, Australia’s Department of Defence submitted the following statement to the Joint Standing Committee On Foreign Affairs, Defence And Trade Inquiry onto Australia-United States Defence Relations:

“The intelligence sharing relationship between the U.S. intelligence community and the agencies

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Given no open source or declassified material is currently available that details specific financial intelligence shared with U.S. agencies, no explicit connection can be made between sources of information and courses of action. Acknowledging that U.S. sanctions against Burma were in place prior to AUSTRAC’s MoU with the U.S., the strengthening of sanctions in relation to AUSTRAC’s MoU with FinCEN is extrapolated from the research and analysis of available open source documents.

35 Nautilus Institute. Australian-U.S. Intelligence Relations—Afghanistan and Iraq. Global Collaborative; Australia In Afghanistan. February 13, 2008. [http://www.globalcollab.org/Nautilus/australia/afghanistan/intel-relations-afghan-iraq](http://www.globalcollab.org/Nautilus/australia/afghanistan/intel-relations-afghan-iraq). It should be noted the Defence Intelligence Organisation (DIO) deals with defense related assessments and provides intelligence analysis to support ADF in operations while the Defence Signals Directorate (DSD) and the Defence Imagery and Geospatial Organisation (DIGO) deal with communications intelligence and interpreting satellite images, respectively.
of the DIG is critical to our defence and security.”\textsuperscript{36} Poignant but powerful. Two years later, after the relationship had further matured, another federal inquiry of Australia’s defense relations with the United States was conducted by the Australian House of Representatives. The testimony submitted by the Returned & Services League—the largest service and ex-service defense association in Australia—was comprehensive and provided real insight into Australia’s security motivations for an alliance with the United States:


\textit{"Our intelligence sharing relationship is cost-effective and efficient and enhances Australia’s access to intelligence on critical areas of interest. In turn, Australia provides the US with high-quality intelligence on a region of significant strategic importance... Without the alliance, Australia would be substantially blind in many critical areas of intelligence gathering and assessment. We cannot afford the investment levels necessary to duplicate America's intelligence gathering capability... The main value to us of this arrangement is that our resources dedicated to intelligence can be focused on specific areas of threat that are of immediate interest to us. This results in better intelligence than if the resources had to be allocated over a much wider range of defence and security threats."}\textsuperscript{37}

Security, however, is not the only motivation that Australia, particularly John Howard, had in strengthening relations with the United States. In addition to having access to unmatchable intelligence resources, the two-way nature of the relationship also afforded Australia greater influence in Washington’s decision-making, a free trade agreement, increased U.S. involvement in the region—especially in Indonesia—and the prestige in Asia that comes from being close to and able to influence Washington.\textsuperscript{38} It has been a very mutually beneficial experience for both nations.

\textsuperscript{36} Department of Defence Submission, Joint Standing Committee On Foreign Affairs, Defence And Trade Inquiry onto Australia - United States Defence Relations. February 17, 2004.


\textsuperscript{38} Sheridan, 13.
THE RISKS OF SHARING: “HAVE SECRETS. WILL SELL. TOP DOLLAR O.B.O.”

The year 1985—the “Year of the Spy”—made it clear just how difficult it was to secure the United States’ intelligence community. It was the year the Office of Naval Intelligence, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency would all discover that there were spies among their ranks—John Walker, Jr., Richard Miller, Edward Howard and Ronald Pelton, respectively. It was also the year the notorious Aldrich Ames of the CIA and Robert Hanson of the FBI would begin their endeavors to betray the highest secrets of the United States to the Russians. The Year of the Spy proved just how vulnerable the intelligence agencies of the U.S. were to penetration, regardless of regular personnel screening, constant counter-measures, and harsh penalties. Understanding how difficult it is to secure intelligence within the confines of the United States itself helps illustrate the risk involved when that intelligence is shared with or sent abroad to others. Australia’s access to U.S. intelligence, and often times sources, doubles the likelihood of third-party penetration by adding another database on which the information is stored. With over 43,880 incidents of malicious activity against the U.S. Department of Defense and defense company computers in 2007 alone, securing intelligence on American networks has proven to be challenging enough in and of itself.39 Does the benefit of sharing outweigh the risk?

John Negroponte, U.S. Director of National Intelligence, 2005-2007, believed so. When asked about the wisdom to increase intelligence sharing with strategic allies, Director Negroponte noted that it was necessary for the United States to assume greater risk and share more sensitive information with allies such as Australia.40 President Bush certainly agreed when

he issued the directive to not only share with the Australians everything in the American
intelligence system that concerned international terrorism and joint military operations but also
to provide the Australians themselves with nearly unfettered access to these databases. Was it a
decision that would come with a price? While time holds the answer, it was a price the United
States had already paid once before, prior to providing Australia with the highly-valuable
intelligence it has access to today.

From July of 1998 to August of 1999, Jean Philippe Wispalaere worked for the
Australian Defense Intelligence Organization (DIO) and had a top secret U.S. clearance to
handle operational intelligence. When Wispalaere quit, he sold more than 900 such documents
for $120,000 by mail from Bangkok to a foreign spy, who was really a U.S. counter-intelligence
agent in disguise.41 A similar occurrence today, with more valuable information on the line,
would be the worst case scenario envisioned by U.S. intelligence officials. It is a reality both
sides—for the success of the coalition, safety of their citizens, and sake of the relationship—hope
never comes to fruition.

WHAT’S NEXT?

In the long history of the intelligence alliance, cooperation has never been as close as it
became under Howard and Bush.42 With new leaders in both countries—President Obama and
Prime Minister Rudd—though both with paralleling political ideologies, will the U.S. and
Australia continue to lean on each other in the next four years as much as they have in the past
four? For Australia, the answer will come in the success, or perceived success, of Afghanistan
and Iraq, which, of course, is code for the United States’ ability to succeed in both places.

Australia chose its new prime minister for his commitment to look out for Australia first, and not

http://origin.csmonitor.com/2005/1017/p07s01-woap.html
42 Sheridan, 98.
simply follow the lead of the U.S. If Iraq and Afghanistan spiral into disarray once again and Australian casualties rise, the Australian public will not only vociferously call for ADF forces to return home but may also demand that Australian contributions to a war they did not sign up for, i.e.- Pine Gap’s contributions, cease immediately. While an interruption of this scale to the ICAT and SIGINT collection network would create great tension within the intelligence relationship, given Australia has far more to lose if the partnership began stepping backwards, it is safe to assume the worst result would be maintaining the status quo, with little to no increase in sharing from either side.

For the United States, the direction and size of the relationship will most likely hinge on the continued testimony and memoranda of U.S. military officials to top policy-makers in Washington. If the contribution and impact of Australia’s intelligence and defense forces to the war terror are articulated as both a virtue and necessity for its success, it will be difficult for the administration to change course, especially in light of the mantra still echoing within the beltway, “Listen to the troops on the ground.” In a recent interview with Lieutenant General Joseph F. Weber, USMC, (ret.), whose final active duty assignment in 2008 was serving as the Commanding General, Marine Forces Command, Fleet Marine Forces Atlantic, the insight he provided on the contribution of Australian Defence Forces to the Coalition is exactly the type of information that Washington needs to hear if the relationship is to grow:

“I worked almost 14 months very closely with the Aussies. They provided a strong team of high level staff officers and enlisted to the Multi-National Force Iraq HQS. The Aussies were most aggressive in providing intelligence support and always team players when it came to sharing information, resources and ideas…and in overall high level staff planning. They were very conscientious and professional...yet they brought a sense of humor on a daily basis to

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43 U.S. Marine Corps Forces Command is the coordinating authority to globally source Marine Corps forces and capabilities to U. S. Joint Forces Command. In this role, Lt.Gen. Weber was responsible for 74,000 personnel and oversaw an annual budget of $80 million and holdings and assets totaling $33 billion.
a much stressed and challenged complex... We can learn much from the Aussies on how to work and..... how to live.

If this is the consensus of top U.S. commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan, which Lt.Gen. Weber indicated was the case, the future of the U.S.-Australian intelligence sharing relationship will certainly be promising. As both nations continue to face a bounty of transnational and domestic threats, it will be welcomed news.

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