

*B-52s, submarines folly, AUSMIN delights, Pine Gap  
expansion – peace movement tasks*

:  
Sydney Anti-AUKUS Coalition  
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*The Pine Gap Project* (with Desmond Ball and Bill Robinson)

*Australian defence facilities* (Nautilus Institute Briefing Book)

*Richard Tanter publications and talks*

# B-52s, submarines folly, AUSMIN delights, Pine Gap expansion

- Key backgrounds:
  - Higher tempo of integration into US war planning
  - concomitant loss of Australian strategic autonomy
  - = High-technology alliance-dependent liberal militarization
  - Chaos of defence planning driven by domestic politics and desire to cling to the US
- B-52H Bomber Task Force to RAAF Tindal in Katherine
  - First Morrison \$1 bn. expansion of Tindal
  - Then USAF tender for further expansion to accommodate up to six B-52H strategic bombers (non-nuclear version) rotating from Barksdale AFB, Louisiana and Guam
    - Aim is to lessen vulnerability strategic bomber task force to Chinese long-range missile attack
  - Australia is to supply RAAF tankers and E-7A Wedgetail early warning and control aircraft and F-35 protection.
  - Key issue is danger of loophole in South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty which allows nuclear-armed transit visits by B-52H nuclear-capable version.
    - Need for peace movement visual monitoring
    - Need for refusal by Albanese government to allow such visits.
- AUSMIN 2022 delights – Posture review, logistics, Marines (sexual assaults), space cooperation, submarine visits,
- US Studies Center, Sydney Uni

Source: Modified from Richard Tanter, '[Tightly Bound: The United States and Australia's Alliance-Dependent Militarization](#)', *Global Asia*, Vol.13 No.1 (2018)



# Nuclear-powered submarines – a gross and dangerous folly

- IF AS ADVERTISED
  - Only utility is to marginally supplement US fleet protection capabilities to attack China, and/or to help destroy China's second strike nuclear deterrence submarine-based missile force
  - = existential threat to China they are unlikely to forget even if it does not happen
  - Massively expensive; huge opportunity costs for actual Aust defence requirements
  - Unlikely to eventuate
  - Dependence on US tech = surrender of Aust strategic autonomy (Malcolm Turnbull in latest Quarterly Essay)



## Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap, 2015 - photokey

Source: Google Earth and photokey in Desmond Ball, Bill Robinson and Richard Tanter, [\*The Antennas of Pine Gap\*](#), Nautilus Institute, Special Reports, 22 February 2016



## Pine Gap's big ears and big infrared eyes: three distinct systems today

1. Original and most important system: ground station for **space-based signals intelligence (SIGINT) collection of a wide range of electronic transmissions**
  2. **Ground-based interception of foreign communications satellite transmissions**
  3. Relay Ground Station for **US early warning infrared surveillance satellites**
- All three systems involve satellites in **geosynchronous or geostationary orbits (GEO)** 36,000 kms above the earth's surface.
  - But in **three quite different ways and three quite different kinds of satellites** in GEO are involved.

Pine Gap is growing, becoming even more important for US through planning for possible China war – in addition to its other roles accumulated over half a century

- Three systems at Pine Gap
- Critical roles in US nuclear and non-nuclear military planning
- Dimensions of expansion :
  - Numbers of antennas at Pine Gap
  - Numbers and types of satellites linked to Pine Gap
  - Qualitative capabilities of systems installed
  - Acceleration of China-focused mission tasking schedules
- Nuclear weapons roles of Pine Gap



Figure 3. Pine Gap signals intelligence compound, Here.com imagery, 2012



Main signals intelligence and  
FORNSAT/COMSAT antennas  
and  
main Operations Buildings

Source: Desmond Ball, Bill  
Robinson and Richard Tanter, *The  
Antennas of Pine Gap*, Nautilus  
Institute, Special Reports, 22  
February 2016, at  
<http://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-specialreports/>

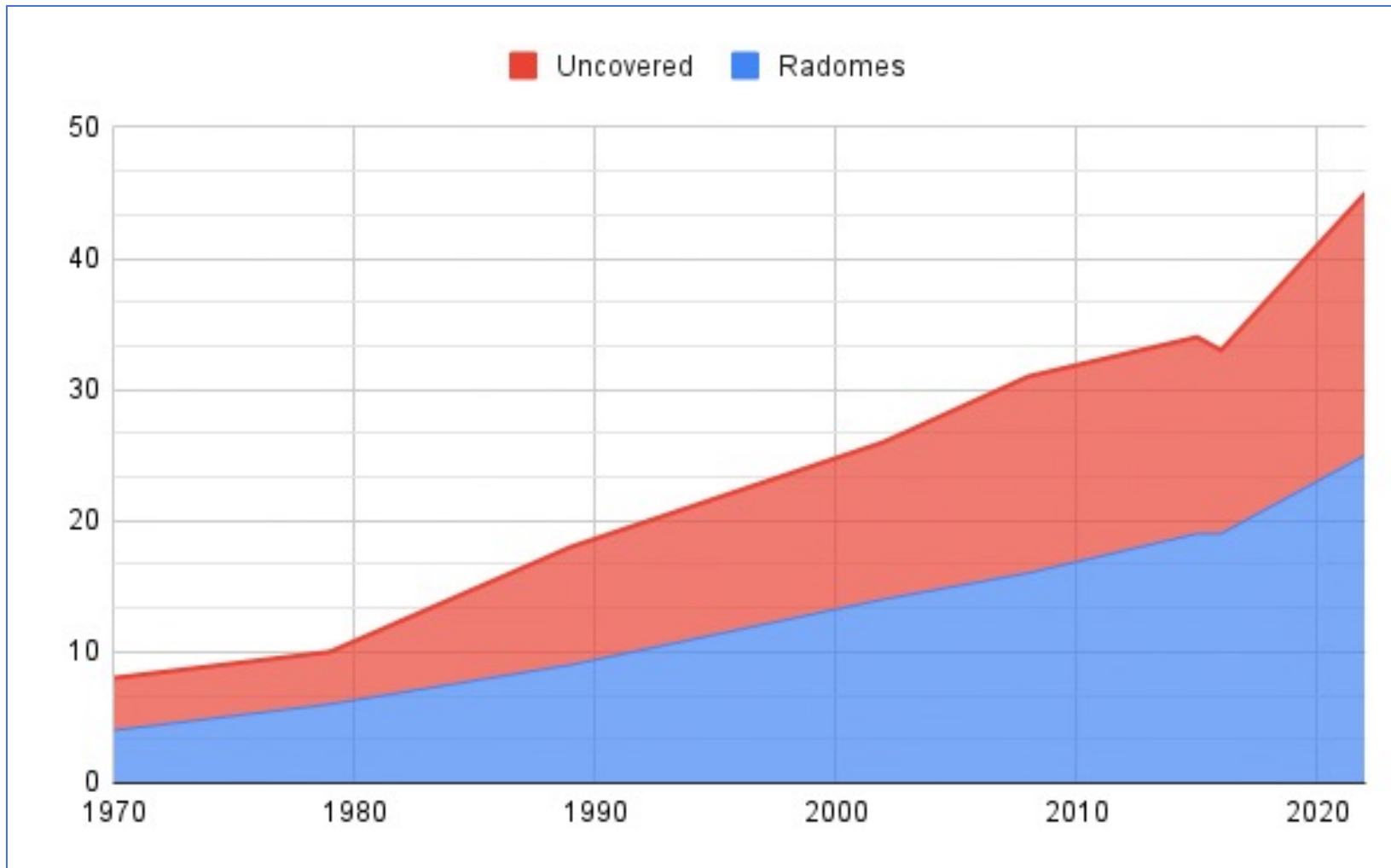


Figure 32. The Relay Ground Station compound, Pine Gap  
(Antennas 05-B, 12-A, 05-A, 13-A, 98-A, 98-B and 13-B)



Source: Kristian Laemmle-Ruff, (Attribution - NonCommercial CC BY-NC).

## Radomes, uncovered antennas and total number of antennas, 1970-2022





Left: Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap  
Right: JDFPG Relay Ground Station

Google Earth, 25 October 2021



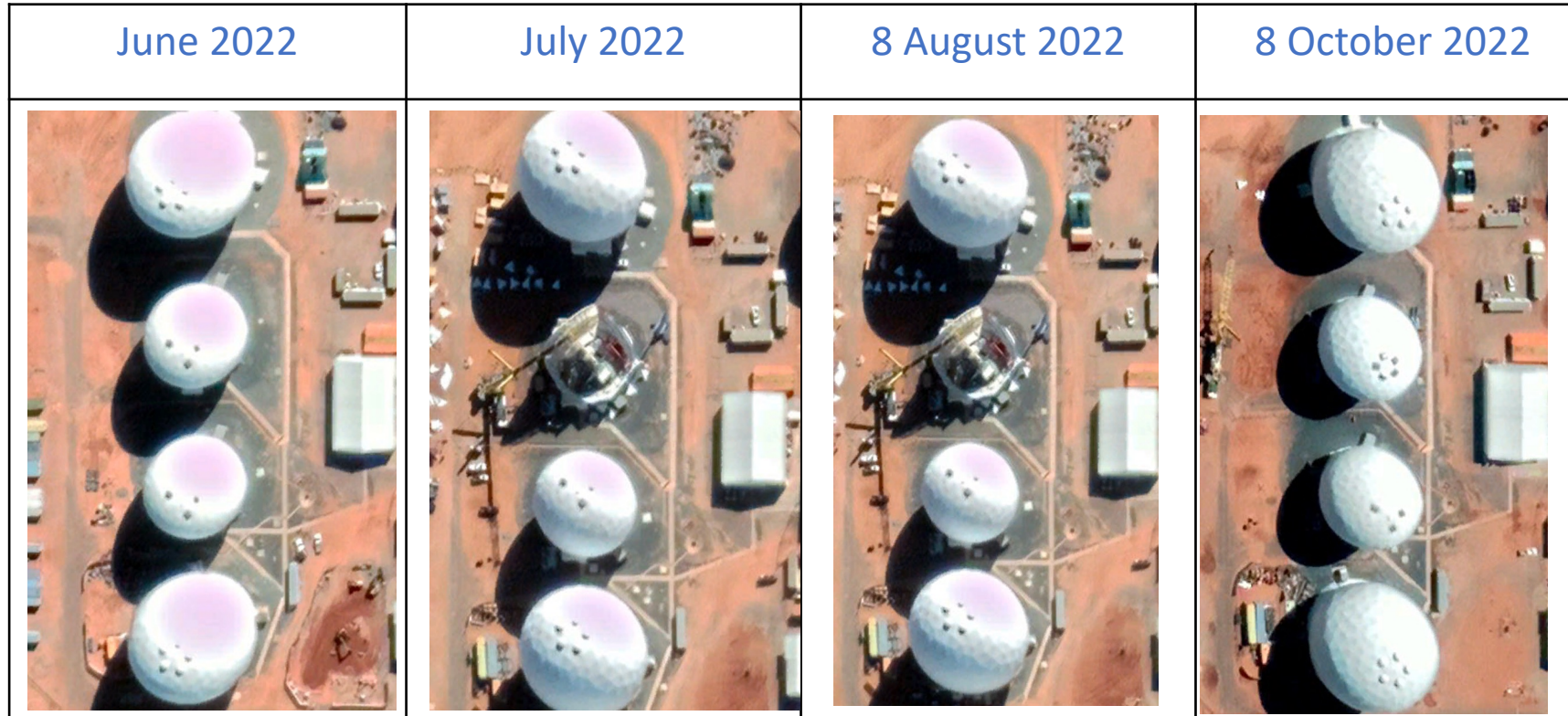


Relay Ground Station-Pacific,  
Pine Gap, 2018 and 2022  
(Google Earth)





Upgrading ground-based signals intelligence interception capability:  
Antenna 99-D replaced by Antenna 22-B, June-September 2022:  
(from top to bottom below: Antennas 10-A, 99-D >> 22-B, 99-C and 85-A)



**Antennas 22-B and 99-C are FORNSAT/COMSAT** ground-based signals intelligence interception of foreign/communications satellites in geosynchronous orbits.

**Antennas 10-A and 85-A** are links to space-based SIGINT signals intelligence (SIGINT) Orion satellites in geosynchronous orbits

# Pine Gap's nuclear weapons roles

1. ***Nuclear attack planning support:*** its 'big ears' in space and on the ground providing the locations and characteristics of enemy operational units, radars and air defences; and collaboration in tracking mobile ICBMs and missile submarines at sea.
2. ***Early warning:*** its infrared satellites detecting enemy nuclear missile launches, giving the US a few minutes of warning of nuclear attack
3. ***Nuclear second strike targeting support:*** detects which enemy missile silos (and submarines) have been fired and which have not, and are therefore to be targeted in a US second nuclear strike.
4. ***Missile defence:*** when Pine Gap detects the first seconds of missile launches and calculates the missiles' likely trajectories, it passes the information to the US missile defence systems, cueing their fire radars to search a tiny portion of the sky where the missiles are gathering enormous speed. Cued by Pine Gap, and if they work as the Pentagon and the arms manufacturers advertise, US missile defences might, just might have a chance of firing their own missiles to hit and destroy the enemy missiles.
5. ***Verification of certain arms control agreements*** by detecting infrared characteristics of adversary test missiles.

## For introductions to Pine Gap today see

- Felicity Ruby, 'Silent partners: US bases in Australia', *Australian Foreign Affairs*, 8 (February 2020)
- Kieran Finnane, [\*Peace Crimes: Pine Gap, National Security and Dissent\*](#), (University of Queensland Press, 2020).
- Kieran Finnane, '[Pine Gap and the protest by the "peace pilgrims"](#)', *Big Ideas*, Radio National, 4 November 2020.
- Richard Tanter, '[Fifty years on, Pine Gap should reform to better serve Australia](#)', *The Conversation*, 9 December 2016.
- Richard Tanter, '[Our poisoned heart: the transformation of Pine Gap](#)', *Arena Magazine*, No. 144, October 2016.
- Richard Tanter, '[Pine Gap's 50th anniversary](#)', *Late Night Live*, Radio National, ABC, 28 September 2016
- For detailed studies of Pine Gap see research papers by Desmond Ball, Bill Robinson, and Richard Tanter (and other colleagues) listed with these and other materials at, [The Pine Gap Project](#), Nautilus Institute.

Extras



## Today's networked ANZUS alliance:

- A greatly increased role for the joint facilities in
  - US global military operations,
  - US nuclear and conventional global conventional military operations,
  - drone assassinations,
  - missile defence, and
  - planning for space warfare;
- technological and organisational integration of Australian military forces with those of the US, as a niche auxiliary force for global deployment;
- an unprecedented missile defence role for Pine Gap in defence of Japan;
- new capacities at a number of joint facilities transforming Australia's military relationship with China, as well as the US.

Richard Tanter, '[Home base](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 25 January 2015

Richard Tanter, '[Tightly Bound: The United States and Australia's Alliance-Dependent Militarization](#)', *Global Asia*, Volume 13, Issue 1, (Spring 2018)

Tanter: 'Polemically, but I think accurately, government policy of reliance on US extended nuclear deterrence against nuclear threats is absurd, obscene and strategically reckless':

- **absurd** – because there is no public assurance from the United States, and hence literally 'incredible'
- **obscene** – because what we call capacity for nuclear deterrence by the US are Weapons of Mass destruction in the hands of others; and
- **reckless** strategically, because Australian reliance on borrowed nuclear protection must surely encourage other neighbouring countries to consider the value of acquiring their own nuclear weapons.

From Richard Tanter, [“Absurd, obscene and reckless – American nuclear weapons in the defence of Australia”](#), [Dissent](#) (Australia), no. 42, Spring 2013.

See also Richard Tanter, [“Just in Case”: Extended Nuclear Deterrence in the Defense of Australia](#), [Pacific Focus](#), Vol. 26, No. 1 (2011)