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# Whitlam 'spooked the CIA'

**SYDNEY —** Claims by Australian journalist John Pilger that the CIA liaised with British intelligence in the dismissal of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam have been backed by the consultant for the program in which they appeared.

Mr William Pinwill, press secretary to Whitlam Defence Minister Bill Morrison in 1975, said British intelligence's involvement was definitely a factor in former Governor-General Sir John Kerr's decision to sack the Whitlam Government in November that year.

He said a reply by Mr Whitlam to a question without notice in Parlia-

ment was what started the ball rolling.

Mr Pinwill claims the CIA and sections of the US State Department wrongly believed Mr Whitlam was planning to close the joint defence research facility at Pine Gap if he was still Prime Minister in December, 1975.

"Mr Whitlam was asked about a Soviet base proposal, to which he replied none of the bases agreements would be extended," Mr Pinwill said.

"He later explained to the then American Ambassador to Australia, Marshall Green, that he had no intentions of ending any agreements, but

the CIA didn't believe it."

Mr Pinwill said meetings he had last August with retired US intelligence officers and diplomats revealed the extent of apprehension.

"It wasn't so much of a plot to get rid of Whitlam, but the CIA were panic stricken with the way the Whitlam Government was going," he said.

Mr Pinwill said Pine Gap, in Alice Springs, was considered the most important base for Western espionage outside the US and its functions were shrouded in secrecy.

"The main fear of the CIA was that Whitlam would disclose the secret

functions of Pine Gap," he said.

"Whitlam was quite proper in not disclosing its functions."

Mr Pinwill said the CIA conveyed its concern about the Whitlam Government to MI5 and MI6 who channelled information to a top-level public servant in Australia who was in direct contact with Sir John Kerr.

"A former senior CIA officer told me they were concerned the Australian Government was running off the rails," he said.

Mr Pinwill said they spoke to the British who were communicating with the senior public servant.

It would never be known to what extent it affected Sir John's decision but it was a factor in his decision to dismiss Mr Whitlam and his Government.

- AAP