

# Australian foreign minister outed as long-time US informant

By Patrick O'Connor  
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A new round of American diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks has revealed that Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr has been a US intelligence source for nearly four decades. The news sheds fresh light on Carr's sudden and unusual elevation from retired state premier to unelected federal senator and foreign minister in March last year.

In 1974 and 1975, Carr was one of a host of Labor Party and trade union figures providing confidential briefings to US embassy officials on the internal discussions, policy differences, and factional rivalries within the Labor government of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam.

In November 1975, Whitlam was sacked and the government removed from office by Governor General John Kerr. The coup involved the highest levels of the state apparatus, working in collaboration with the US embassy and the CIA. The government's ousting was orchestrated amid a deepening global crisis of the capitalist system, with Whitlam and his colleagues increasingly unable to contain escalating militancy within the working class, and sharp geo-strategic tensions generated by US imperialism's defeat in Vietnam. Whitlam had pledged his full support for the US-Australia alliance, and for US imperialism's unhampered use of military and intelligence bases on Australian soil. But throughout 1975, as the latest diplomatic cables confirm, Washington became increasingly concerned that Whitlam was losing control over the situation.

Carr was among those feeding inside information to the US as Washington's destabilisation operations were stepped up before Kerr's move against the government.

In 1974-75, Carr was a young and rapidly rising figure within the New South Wales (NSW) Labor Party

Right. As well as working as a journalist with the Australian ABC and the right-wing *Bulletin* magazine, Carr served as president of Labor's NSW branch in 1970 and national president of Young Labor in 1972. Between 1972 and 1978 he worked in the NSW Labor Council, the state's peak union body.

One cable, sent from the US embassy in August 1974, reported on the escalating number of workers' strikes and described a discussion in which Carr "expressed deep concern over impact of labor disputes on prospects of Labor government." Another cable sent the same month, headed "Australia's troubles and Whitlam's troubles—a gathering crisis," reported that Carr and John Ducker, then president of the NSW Labor Party, were "concerned by Whitlam's current tendency to delegate practically everything." Carr added that "economic policy has never been Whitlam's bag, but until the present crisis he has been prepared to seek advice and to exert leadership." In February 1975, another cable reported that Carr had provided information on the NSW Labor "left" parliamentarian George Petersen.

The full extent of Carr's discussions with US officials, including CIA personnel, in 1974-75 remains unknown. The diplomatic cables—previously declassified by the State Department but only now digitised in searchable format, through WikiLeaks' new "Public Library of US Diplomacy" (PlusD)—do not include any details of the CIA's active operations in Australia at the time, consistent with the silence on such covert activities in all the diplomatic cables.

Carr last week dismissed the revelations, declaring, "I was in my 20s. I could have said anything."

This flippant response was accepted as good coin by the entire political and media establishment. Not a word of opposition was expressed by a single Labor

Party or trade union figure to Carr's role in feeding inside information to the US embassy on the Whitlam government. Likewise, there was silence from the Greens. The media promptly dropped the issue, following initial reports in the Fairfax Press, which was provided advance access to the cables. Not a single question was put to Carr about what else he has discussed with US officials over the past four decades.

The episode underscores the extent to which Australian imperialism functions as a loyal servant of US imperialism. The Australian state apparatus operates accordingly, and is thoroughly integrated at every level into Washington's diplomatic and intelligence apparatus. Within ruling circles in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne—among politicians, corporate executives, journalists, legal personnel and others—it is regarded as entirely natural and uncontroversial to volunteer one's services as a US intelligence source. As the latest batch of cables makes clear, Carr was only one of a large number of Labor and union figures who informed and collaborated with the US embassy—including Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, both of whom later became prime ministers.

The extensive US network within the Labor Party and unions was utilised in 2010, 35 years after the Canberra Coup, to remove Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. Soon after Rudd had taken office in 2007, the US embassy had relayed to Washington its hostility toward the prime minister's attempt to establish a new diplomatic mechanism to mediate between China and the US. This cut across the Obama administration's "pivot" to the region, which aimed to maintain US imperialism's domination of Asia and the Pacific by militarily and strategically encircling China. Early on, Gillard was identified as a viable successor to Rudd, having demonstrated her pro-US and pro-Israeli credentials. In June 2010, Rudd was suddenly removed in an inner-party coup, after a group of Labor Party and union factional powerbrokers moved against him. Virtually all the so-called "faceless men", the WikiLeaks' cables later revealed, had previously worked closely with the US embassy and were identified as "protected sources".

The coup marked a significant shift in Canberra's foreign policy settings, with Gillard unconditionally aligning Australian imperialism with Obama's confrontation of Beijing.

Carr's installation was bound up with this shift. After ousting Rudd as prime minister, Gillard had been compelled to appoint Rudd as foreign minister in the aftermath of the August 21 federal election. In February 2012, however, Gillard provoked Rudd's resignation and defeated his attempted leadership challenge. Carr, previously NSW premier between 1995 and 2005, was then suddenly drafted into the position. He was plugged into parliament courtesy of the resignation of another of the embassy's "protected sources" who orchestrated the 2010 leadership coup, Senator Mark Arbib. One of Labor's most influential, and ambitious, powerbrokers, Arbib abruptly quit his lucrative and secure senate spot. The stated reason, absurdly, was that Arbib needed to spend more time with his family.

In reality, the episode marked one US asset carrying out his orders to make way for another.

The Obama administration undoubtedly regarded Carr as a well-known safe pair of hands. Despite previously publishing tactical criticisms of Washington's "pivot" to Asia, Carr has since toed the Obama-Gillard line on every issue related to China. He has enthusiastically taken up the role of point man for Washington in its operations in other parts of the world, including the Middle East and Africa.

On Syria, Carr has been among the most outspoken figures internationally for a stepped up US-NATO intervention against the Assad government. Seeking to promote the bogus "humanitarian" pretext for the regime change drive, Carr has condemned the Syrian regime for massacres that evidence subsequently indicated were carried out by the CIA-backed Islamist opposition militias. He also suggested that the crisis in Syria could be resolved through the assassination of Assad and other senior political figures in Damascus (see "Australian foreign minister suggests 'assassination' of Syrian leaders").

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