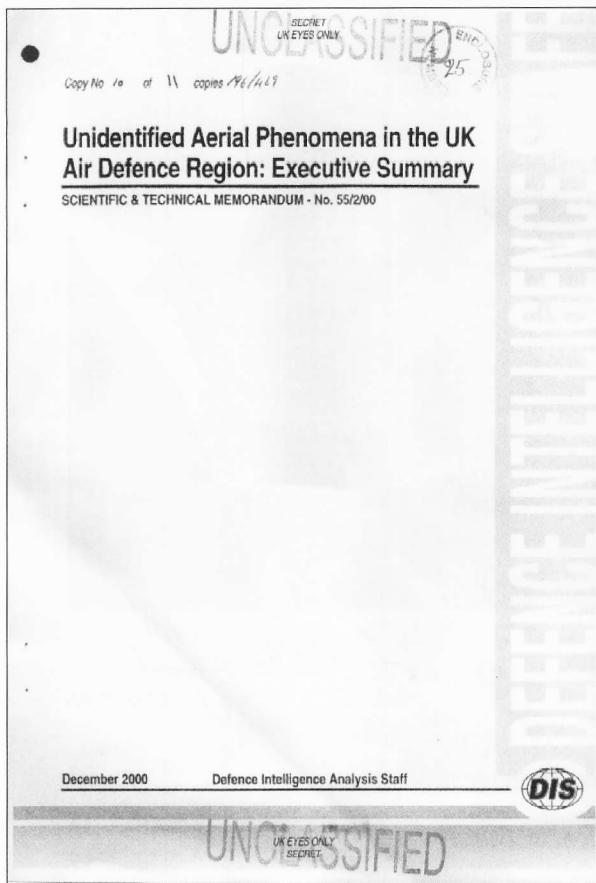


IUR

International UFO Reporter

Volume 30, Number 4



THE BRITISH MoD STUDY: PROJECT CONDIGN

SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM - No. 552/00

UK RESTRICTED
SECRET
UK EYES ONLY

AN EXAMPLE UAP FORMATION OF THE TRIANGULAR TYPE

UK EYES ONLY
UK RESTRICTED
SECRET

SE	DURATION	SIZE	MOTION	SOUND
or Bead (joined rec) Lightning, is	Seconds to Minutes	Small	0 to Fast	"
n Through Mist	Seconds to Minutes	Small	Nil	Nil
Dog	Minutes	Large	Nil	Nil
ruff / Helio ^[2] ang and Steady g or Both	Seconds-Minutes	A/C Size	0 to Fast	Wind Dependent
up (No Wings)	Minutes	Large	0 to Slow	"
apple Lights sp				
s (Reflective shells) seen as gular formation	Seconds-Minutes	Smaller Flocks	0 to Slow	No
son / Sonde ^[4]	Minutes	Small and Large	0 to Slow	No
lights ^[5]	Seconds-Minutes	Small	0 to Slow	No
er ^[6]	Seconds-Minutes	Small	0 to Fast	No
	Minutes-Hours	Small	Nil	No
	Hours	Large	Nil	No
L	Night	Moon	Hours	Large
M	Night	Meteor (often with tail)	Seconds-Minutes	Small
N	Night	Space Junk (Re-entry)	Seconds	Very Fast
P	Night	Satellite	Minutes	Slow
Q	Day/Dusk	Mirage	Minutes	Slow
R	Night	Earthlights (e.g. Norway Hessdalen) ^[7] Methane Combustion over Marshes	Seconds-Hours	Small ^[8]

Notes:

13
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INTERNATIONAL

UFO

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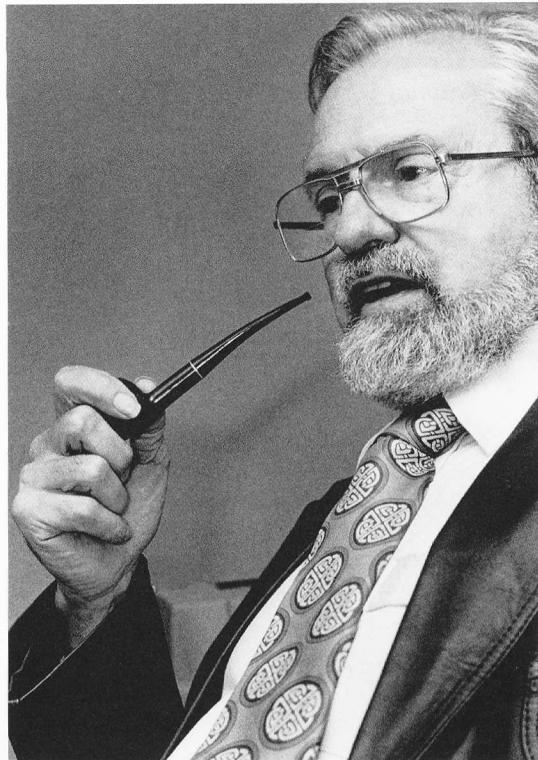
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Published in August 2006.

International UFO Reporter (ISSN 0720-174X) is published quarterly by the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited. Copyright © 2006 by the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies. Third-class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois.

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Address all article submissions, letters to the editor, and other editorial correspondence to *International UFO Reporter*, Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago,

Illinois 60659. Address all subscription correspondence to *International UFO Reporter*, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659.

The *International UFO Reporter* is a benefit publication mailed to Associates of the Center for a contribution of \$25.00 or more. Foreign Associates add \$5.00 for delivery. All amounts in U.S. funds. Other publications also available for contributors of larger amounts. For details, write to the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659, USA.

Postmaster: Send Form 3579 to CUFOS, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659.

THE BRITISH MoD STUDY: PROJECT CONDIGN

BY DAVID CLARKE AND GARY ANTHONY

Condign, *adj.* Severe and well deserved (usually of punishment).
—*Concise Oxford Dictionary*

Early in May 2006 we revealed to the world's media the existence of a secret study of UFOs, codenamed "Condign," commissioned by the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD). The discovery of the study's four-volume report, completed in February 2000, was the culmination of almost 18 months of investigative research involving a team of Britain's most experienced UFO researchers.¹

The story made news headlines around the world, but the superficial nature of the coverage can be summarized by the headline of the London *Sunday Times*, May 7, 2006: "Sorry ET—you're just a puff of plasma." At our press conference, held the following day in London, it quickly became apparent that the news media were happy to base their coverage of the MoD study upon the contents of the Executive Summary alone. Few journalists had the time to scrutinize the 465 pages of the main body of the report when the full contents were released on the MoD website shortly after our announcement.

The reaction of ufologists was equally superficial, with dismissive cries of whitewash, garbage, and disinformation widely disseminated across the internet, even before the complete text was available. Unfortunately, in the clamor to express an opinion and take a position, a number of commentators overlooked the historical significance of the discovery and its more interesting contents and findings.

The key finding from the perspective of ufology is expressed in the introduction to the study, where the report's author states that it is an indisputable fact that some UFOs, or UAPs (Unidentified Aerial Phenomena) as they are described throughout the report, *are generated by an unknown phenomenon*. As British skeptic John Rimmer commented, "Isn't this what ufologists have been wanting to

hear [from official studies] for years?"²

That may well be the case, but it seems the negative reaction was mainly because the report's author concluded there is no evidence this "phenomenon" has an extraterrestrial source. He attributes the residue of unexplained incidents to "natural, but relatively rare phenomena." Some of these are well known, if little understood, such as ball lightning. Others, such as atmospheric plasmas, "are still barely understood" and the report makes it clear that "the conditions and method of formation of the electrically-charged plasmas and the scientific rationale for sustaining them for significant periods is incomplete and not fully understood."

Nevertheless, this finding and additional speculation concerning the possible effects of plasma-related magnetic and electric fields on humans became the focus of all the subsequent media and ufological discussion. However flawed these findings may be, the fact that a study of this magnitude was commissioned by the UK government as recently as 1996 must be significant. During the course of the study, the British government continued to maintain, in public at least, that they had no interest in UFOs. Indeed, they insisted on a number of occasions, both in parliamentary answers and in statements issued to the media, that they had never carried out any detailed examination of the phenomenon.

The fact that the report was commissioned at all raises a number of questions. At face value the study was commissioned to determine, once and for all, if the UFO phenomenon posed any form of threat to UK national security. The main outcome, as would be expected, was to support the MoD's policy—which has remained consistent for more than half a century—that UFOs, whatever their origin, were "of no defence significance."

Why then, after years of playing down UFOs, did the MoD decide at this late stage to commission a study, however incomplete or inadequate, into the phenomenon? And if there was nothing to hide, why was the study carried out in great secrecy and only uncovered as a result of our sleuthing using Britain's new Freedom of Information legislation?

This article will attempt to answer some of these questions. We first summarize the nature of the MoD's interest in UFOs. We will then explain in detail how we came to learn of the report's existence and how we obtained it, drawing

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upon original MoD documentation released to us under the FOIA. Finally, we will look at the contents of the report itself, the sources used by the author, and the scientific credibility of the conclusions and recommendations.

THE MoD, FOIA, AND UFOs

The very existence of the UK MoD report would have remained a secret if our team had not persisted in efforts over a number of years to gain access to official records on UFOs withheld from the public under Britain's stifling secrecy laws. Before the millennium, the UK government's interest in UFOs had remained obscured by the shadow of the more extensive and highly public USAF Project Blue Book. Before the publication of the Colorado University study (the "Condon Report") brought the USAF's public responsibility for UFO reports to an end in 1969, British Air Ministry policy on the subject was heavily influenced by the USAF and CIA.

For decades, few details of the Air Ministry's own interest in UFOs emerged into the public domain. This was partly because of a decision taken as early as 1952 or 1953 to play down the subject. The fact that the Air Ministry, which became part of an expanded Ministry of Defence in 1964, maintained an office in Whitehall that dealt with UFO reports as part of a range of other duties has been public knowledge for decades. What has remained a mystery was the extent of the MoD's investigations and research. For years, letters from civilian UFO researchers to Whitehall went unanswered or were stonewalled, and even MPs found it difficult to discover anything substantive about the Ministry's policy on the subject.

This situation did not arise because of a "conspiracy of silence" concerning UFOs in particular. For much of the Cold War, Britain's secrecy laws covered every single aspect of the Whitehall machinery. Before the mid-1990s, the Public Records Act, which kept all official papers secret for a minimum of 30 years, and the Official Secrets Act, which prevents military and civil servants from speaking in public on any topic, ensured nothing significant could leak out of the MoD machine.

As a result, before 1994 it was virtually impossible to obtain access to any UK government files until 30 years after action on them was finalized. However, under an initiative pioneered under the Major administration a limited right of access to government documents was introduced. This allowed researchers to gain access to a certain amount of material previously withheld. It was the proactive use of this legislation that allowed us to obtain early release of MoD files on the Rendlesham Forest incident and the report by the Flying Saucer Working Party during 2001–2002.³

Since 2005, researchers have had a new weapon to help them access official information. The Freedom of Information Act has brought to light masses of information held by official agencies on UFOs and other unexplained phenomena. And it was through careful use of the FOI that we uncovered the existence of the MoD study and obtained a

full copy after lengthy negotiations with the department concerned.

ON THE TRAIL OF CONDIGN

The existence of the study emerged from extensive contacts we have had with desk staff at the Directorate of Air Staff since 2000. DAS is the MoD secretariat currently responsible for UFOs and is often referred to as "the UFO desk." It is the most recent incarnation of the various secretariats that have, since at least 1954, dealt with administrative tasks in support of the RAF. One of these is to act as the MoD's focal point for UFO inquiries from the public, the press, and Members of Parliament. Since the 1950s this responsibility has been held by a number of different branches, including S6 (Air), S4 (Air), DS8, and Sec(AS), the latter being the name it used in 1991–1994 when Nick Pope was employed as a desk officer there. Sec(AS) finally became DAS in yet another Whitehall reshuffle late in the year 2000.

For many years, MoD has insisted that this secretariat was the single and only branch with responsibility for UFO reports, a task that took up only a fraction of its time. It is certainly true that DAS and its predecessors acted as a public focal point at MoD for UFO matters. However, inside the confines of Whitehall, DAS was just one of a number of more specialist MoD branches whose job it was to assess any defense or intelligence implications of UFO sightings at a much higher level of security clearance. The most secretive and shadowy of these branches is the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) whose space weapons section, DI55, has been responsible for assessing the "scientific and technical" aspects of UFO reports since 1967. The fact that DI55 played a role in the study of UFOs did not emerge publicly until 1986 when a standard MoD UFO report form that contained an internal distribution list was released (Figure 1). Such lists were normally edited from forms released to the public, but in this case a clerical error revealed the true extent of the ministry's involvement.

In July 2001, we asked DAS if DI55 continued to keep records or files on UFOs. The answer was: "As part of the MoD's assessment of aerial sightings, [UFO] reports were copied [by the Air Staff Secretariat] . . . to [a branch of] the Directorate of Intelligence Scientific and Technical (DIST). Towards the end of 2000, DIST decided that these reports were of no defence interest and should no longer be sent to them. The branch still retains files containing reports received up to 4 December 2000."

Following up this intriguing response, we asked the MoD to clarify the current position and were told that for more than 30 years UFO reports had been routinely copied to DI55 "in case they contained any information of value relating to their primary role of analysing the performance and threat of foreign weapons systems, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes and emerging technologies." However, towards the end of 2000 they had decided these reports were "no longer valuable" and should

~~SECRET~~
~~UK RESTRICTED~~
~~UK EYES ONLY~~
~~UNCLASSIFIED~~

ANNEX B

MODCIS (RAF10)

ANNEX A TO
SOP 502

101

REPORT OF AN UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT

1. Date, Time & Duration of Sighting 262050 Local Apr 93 several minutes
2. Description of Object (No of objects, size, shape, colour, brightness) Like a puff of cloud, then circular, very light with a red light flashing (note - crossing from right to left)
3. Location, indoor/outdoor, stationary/moving Outside
4. How observed (naked eye, binoculars, other optical device, still or moving) naked eye
5. Direction in which object first seen Going from Wimbledon towards Roehampton (A landmark may be more useful than a badly estimated bearing)
6. Angle of Sight (Estimated heights are unreliable) Not known
7. Distance (By reference to a known landmark) None estimated
8. Movements (Changes in 5,6 & 7 may be of more use than estimates of course and speed) Seemed to be about the speed of an aircraft
9. Met conditions during observations Clear sky (Moving clouds, haze, mist etc)
10. Nearby objects (Telephone lines, high voltage lines, reservoir, lake or dam, swamp or marsh, river, high buildings, tall chimneys, steeples, spires, TV or radio masts, airfields, generating plant, factories, pits or other sites with floodlights or night lighting) Nothing of note
11. To whom reported (Police, military, press etc) AFDO
12. Name & Address of Informant
XXXXXX just off Wimbledon Common

S.40

~~UNCLASSIFIED~~
UK EYES ONLY
UK RESTRICTED
~~SECRET~~

Page B-1

Fig. 1. Standard UAP report form used by the Air Ministry and MoD.

~~SECRET~~
UK RESTRICTED
UK EYES ONLY
~~UNCLASSIFIED~~

13. Background of Informant that may be volunteered
Sensible, was partially mollified by the Airship Ford Mondeo

14. Other Witnesses

15. Date, Time of Receipt (in AFOR)
261955Z Apr 93

16. Any Unusual Meteorological Conditions

17. Remarks

Would have believed the Airship Ford Mondeo but for the fact that we were told it was operating in the Ilford/Romford area. May we have a Telephone No for the operators of the airship so that we may check its operating area? That would be very helpful.

XXXXXX S.40

Date: 26 Apr 93

RO2
Duty Operations Officer
Air Force Operations

Distribution:

Sec(AS)2, Room XXX Main Building
AEW/XX, Room XXX Main Building
DI 55, Room XXX Metropole Building
File D/AFOPS/2/5/1

not relevant

NB. Please note that the format of this form accords with Cipol formats

TO ALL AFDOS; PLEASE USE THIS AS A MASTER COPY AND IMMEDIATELY ON OPENING USE THE "SAVE AS" FUNCTION TO MAKE A COPY FOR THE ACTUAL REPORT! SORRY BUT IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO PUT THIS REMARK AT THE START OF THE REPORT, AS IF TRIED ALL THE BLOCK SETTINGS ARE DESTROYED!!!

~~UNCLASSIFIED~~
UK EYES ONLY
UK RESTRICTED
~~SECRET~~

Page B-2

Fig. 1 (continued). UAP report form.

IUR ♦ 30:4

no longer be sent to them.

This decision was a surprising one. In effect it marked the end of the Defence Intelligence Staff's involvement in UFO matters. Their interest could be traced all the way back to the deliberations of the Flying Saucer Working Party and the report they produced which was used to brief Prime Minister Winston Churchill following the Washington, D.C., UFO flap in 1952. What possibly could have happened in 2000 to lead them to decide the phenomenon was of no further defense interest?

As we puzzled over this question, we agreed such a final policy decision must have been based on a study of some kind. So early in 2005 we decided to use the UK's newly arrived Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), to request copies of correspondence between DI55 and the civilian "UFO desk" from the relevant period, circa 1997–2000.

We were already aware from other released material that a "policy review" on UFOs had been carried out by the MoD in January 1997. This led us to suspect that whatever had caused DI55 to abandon UFO work may be revealed in the correspondence generated by this review. As a result, in August 2005 a number of MoD documents were released under the FOIA. These dated back to 1993 and included a copy of a minute dated December 4, 2000, that announced the completion of the DI55 study (Figure 2). The security classification of this document was "Secret," with the caveat "UK Eyes Only," but even this information was withheld until release on appeal early in 2006 (see Appendix B).

In many ways these background documents were more interesting than the contents of the report itself. They revealed how since the 1960s UFO reports received by the MoD had been routinely copied to a range of specialist branches. In addition to Sec(AS) or DAS—the supposed "focal point"—all reports were copied to DI55 and various RAF units dealing with air defense and radar. It was these specialist branches that were responsible for making further inquiries into cases deemed to be of defense interest.

These documents reveal a significant fact which is crucial to any critical evaluation of the credibility of the report's conclusions. This is the lack of any in-depth investigations carried out by the MoD. After 1967, when the last field investigations were carried out into UFO reports, none of these branches were allowed to follow up reported sightings or interview witnesses. This procedure, which would appear to be essential for any serious appraisal of the phenomenon, was strictly ruled out as it was deemed to contradict public statements that MoD had no interest in the subject. Indeed, one document notes that for a period of more than 20 years, due to pressure on staff resources, UFO reports copied to DI55 had been simply glanced at, then filed away.

The basic source material utilized by the report's author was, therefore, limited to a standard report form that had been used by the Air Ministry and MoD since at least 1953 (Figure 1, pp. 5–6). In Volume 1 of the Condign report he writes:

In the 1950s, the then Air Ministry produced a "minimum format," one page, "UFO" reporting procedure for both public and military reporting of the phenomena. This procedure has remained unchanged and all event analysis in this report is based on an analysis of a voluminous paper database, which spans about 25 years. Further, it is not within the remit of the department to pursue witnesses to elicit any further information beyond that which they have provided to the MoD on the standard form. This information source has many inadequacies—and much of the initial work concentrated on the conversion of this material into computer database format.

What also emerges from the report is that neither DI55 or any other MoD branch had carried out any study, other than a basic numerical listing, of the thousands of reports they had received since the 1950s. Even worse, record-keeping was so poor that desk officers were unaware of work carried out on the subject in the past in all but the vaguest terms. Large collections of sighting reports and correspondence, including intelligence reports, had been routinely destroyed at five-year intervals until 1967 as they were deemed to be of "transient interest." As a result, relevant papers, such as that by the Flying Saucer Working Party, had been "lost" in the defense archives for decades. Ironically, the six-page report summarizing the Working Party's findings was not discovered in MoD archives until 2001 as a direct result of our requests, almost a year after the Condign report's author had completed his study!

This level of interdepartmental ignorance is highlighted by a Sec(AS) file note from 1995 that sums up the MoD's knowledge of its own work on UFOs as follows: "Essentially, we don't do research into the phenomena; we haven't done any; we only would if there were some good reason for doing so—i.e., evidence of a threat. It remains the case that no threat has been discerned which has been attributed to an unidentified flying object."

Several attempts had been made pre-1996 to pressure the MoD into carrying out a study of UFOs. The most significant occurred during the UFO flap of 1967–1968, which saw a substantial increase in the number of reports received by Whitehall. As a result, the Ministry found itself particularly vulnerable to pressure from the press, from MPs and Peers of the Realm, many of them encouraged by ufologists. The idea for a study at this stage was abandoned when the negative conclusions of the Colorado University team, commissioned by the USAF, were published in 1969. The MoD was then able to claim that the U.S. investigation supported their informal conclusion that UFO reports did not represent a defense threat. They argued that any British study was likely to duplicate the USAF findings and would therefore constitute a waste of public money.

Unlike the USAF, however, in 1970 the MoD decided to continue to receive UFO reports but would not commit any resources to investigate them unless a threat to UK

defenses was identified. Almost two decades later in 1986, under great secrecy, staff in a scientific support branch, Science 3(RAF), drew up a plan to produce a computerized database of the thousands of UFO reports they had on file. They felt this could help other branches categorize sightings and answer queries from the public. This proposal was supported by DI55. But when news of the plan leaked to Sec(AS) in February 1988, officials were furious and demanded that all work on the database stop. A handwritten note from the head of Sec(AS) found in policy documents released in 2005 reads: "...spoke to [Science 3] explaining that this could be very embarrassing for us and urging caution. It is exactly what we (and Ministers) have been saying for years we do not do, and could not justify!"

As a result of this intervention, the DI55 officer backed down and sent a memo to the Director General of Scientific and Technical Intelligence (DGSTI) on March 11, 1988, which read, "I understand that when Sec(AS) heard about the study, they decreed that all work should cease as it was in contravention of Ministerial statements to the effect that UFOs did not pose a threat to the UK, and that resources would not be diverted from more important work to investigate UFO incidents."

Fortunately, the impetus to produce a database of cases that could form the basis for a definitive study did not end with this shameful episode. Curiously, it was DI55 who continued to champion the cause for a fully funded study of UFOs in the face of continued attempts by the UFO desk—Sec(AS)—to place obstacles in its path. On June 1, 1993, the DI55 desk officer wrote to his new opposite number in Sec(AS)2a, Nick Pope, who was already noted as being more sympathetic to the subject than his predecessors: "You may be interested to hear that at long last I have had some funds allocated for serious UFO research. The study will include a review of our data, the construction of a database, a detailed review of specified incidents and recommendations for the future. . . . Needless to say we do not want this broadcast and it is for your information only."

Of interest here is the original intention to include within the context of a fully funded study "a detailed review of specified incidents." This seemingly fundamental requirement was removed from the Terms of Reference at a later stage, apparently for financial reasons. A follow-up minute from DI55 to Sec(AS), dated October 18, 1993, underlines their determination to undertake the study: "A cursory glance at [our] files indicates that over the years a large amount of data has been accumulated. We have never therefore established if UAP's exist and, if they do, whether or not they pose a defence threat to the UK. Some recent events, and a cursory examination of the files indicate that the topic may be worthy of a short study."

In short, by the mid-1990s with public interest in UFOs running at an all-time high, DI55 felt the MoD was particularly vulnerable if closely questioned on their standard line that UFOs were of no defense significance. They believed it would be difficult to sustain this position if they were forced

to admit that no study had ever been carried out. In a 1997 internal exchange concerning the nature of DI55's interest in UAPs, this dilemma is summarized as follows: "The lack of evidence to date in DIS on the extraterrestrial hypothesis has to reflect the fact that we have not carried out any analysis."

This concern is in effect the genesis of the decision to commission the Condign study. In support of the idea of a UK study, a DI official added: "I am aware, through intelligence sources, that Russia believes that such phenomena exist and has a small team studying them. I am also aware that an informal group exists in the US intelligence community and it is possible that this reflects a more formal organisation. . . . It is difficult to meet our remit of advising on possible threat implications since we have never studied the topic of UAPs."

However, despite its initial optimism DI55 said it could not afford to divert any of its desk officers to examine UFO files "to determine whether we should apply any significant effort to the matter." They went on to propose the employment of an outside contractor—a person "well known to DI55"—who could be offered the task as an extension on an existing defense contract. This would, they said, avoid having to put the project out to tender which "would potentially expose the study to too wide an audience . . . since a potential exists for political embarrassment."

DI55 attached a draft copy of the proposed contract for the UFO study which specified the employment of "a degree level engineer, with a [technical intelligence?] background, to prepare an Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP) database." Even at this early stage the project hit a familiar obstacle—cuts in defense funding—and the initiative did not go ahead. DI55 made two further attempts in 1995 to gain approval for funding, but the timing clashed with the onset of a Defence Study deemed more important than UFOs, and the project was shelved yet again.

THE CONDIGN REPORT

After three years of prevarication, on December 11, 1996, DI55 finally wrote to their favored contractor asking him to initiate a computerized database of their UFO records. He was given complete access to the department's UFO records, which included 22 files dating back to the mid-1970s. The database, they stipulated, should include at the minimum,

- an event number for each incident
- details of location(s) including any potential military or economic targets
- times and dates
- witness details
- categorization of the event (e.g., aircraft/space junk/hoax/unidentified)
- any possible explanation, such as military exercises.

This contract (NNR2/366) formed the "Terms of Reference" for the UAP project, which was included as an

appendix to the final report. At this stage DI55 warned the contractor, “because of the sensitivity of this activity it must [sic] be conducted on a strict need-to-know basis at SECRET UK EYES B level. The activity will be known as PROJECT CONDIGN.”

Much speculation has surrounded the meaning of “Condign,” with connections made to the USAF project Sign and the University of Colorado Condon report. One definition of Condign, cited earlier in this article, refers to a punishment well deserved. This may be a reference to the MoD’s attitude to the “UFO problem,” as they described it. Publicly they insist that Condign, as in the case with other codenames for MoD projects, was a randomly generated word and any connections with Condon are “purely coincidental.”

The identity of the contractor who carried out the study and produced the report remains unknown. The MoD say his identity, or that of the company he worked for, cannot be revealed under an exemption to the FOIA which protects the details of defense contractors. This exemption is currently the subject of an appeal to the Information Commissioner who has the power to order the MoD to reveal information if he decides the release of the information is in the public interest.

The documents released by the MoD do provide a limited insight into the background of the report’s author, whom we henceforth designate “Mr. X.” They reveal he has a background in the RAF and technical intelligence and had been called upon by the MoD to offer expert advice on UFO reports on a number of occasions in the past. He may also have had a personal experience of his own, which he revealed when discussing the standard MoD UFO questionnaire that he says was “invented” in the 1950s, adding: “I know because I filled one in myself after a sortie when flying in the RAF at the time.”

In the same memo, addressed to M. J. Fuller at Sec(AS) and dated January 22, 1997, Mr. X emphasized that he wished to keep “a low profile,” writing to Sec(AS) as follows: “as [deleted] one could imagine the embarrassment to [deleted] if my activities were media knowledge—especially as they would undoubtedly soon link these with my other known activities on . . . and probably connect my long-standing involvement with DI55—which we also wish to avoid.”

It was only as a result of this correspondence between Fuller and Mr. X early in 1997 that Sec(AS) first learned that DI55 was now working on a detailed study of the contents of its UFO archive. This revelation came at precisely the time when Sec(AS) had embarked upon a review of its UFO policy. The review itself was a result of the mounting workload generated during 1996–1997 by inquiries from the media and public following a number of high-profile UFO stories. The review was aimed at clarifying the MoD’s role in UFO matters and reducing its workload on the subject. As a result, from May 1997 Sec(AS) agreed to continue copying reports to DI55 and to Air Defence staff. However, only those which Sec(AS) judged to be well documented, corroborated, and timely

would be passed to specialist staffs in the future.

These documents reveal much about the compartmental mindset that operates within the MoD, where it is quite possible for one department to be unaware of work being carried out by another at a higher security level. They also give the lie to claims that the civilian UFO desk was the focal point for what Nick Pope has described as “the British Government’s UFO Project.” The newly released documents provide unambiguous evidence that, since 1995, Sec(AS) (renamed DAS in 2000), were out of the loop and were not involved at any stage in the study or production of the report.

According to the DIST minute of December 4, 2000, announcing completion of the study (Figure 2, pp. 10–11), only the Director General (Research and Technology) along with DI55 and DI51 received copies of all four volumes. The UK Air Defence Ground Environment (UKADGE) received the Executive Summary and Volume 3, which contains “sensitive” material related to the limitations of UK radar in the detection of UAPs.” Summaries of the UAP report were sent to the Deputy Chief of Defence Intelligence (DCDI), to the Inspectorate of Flight Safety (RAF), and to HQ MATO (Military Air Traffic Organisation, RAF Uxbridge).

The DIST minute revealed that DI55 had concluded sighting reports provided nothing of value in its assessment of “threat weapons systems.” As a result, the department had decided to “carry out no further work on the subject [of UAPs]” and added, “while most of the report is classified at only RESTRICTED UKEO [see Appendix B] we hardly need remind addressees of the media interest and consequently the sensitivity of the report. Please protect accordingly, and discuss the report only with those who have a need to know.”

Sec(AS)—renamed DAS in 2001—was conspicuous by its absence from this privileged distribution list. Presumably this was because someone at a higher level in the pecking order felt they had no “need to know.” This decision may well be a direct result of the activities of the former Sec(AS) desk officer Nick Pope, who had gone public with his pro-UFO beliefs in 1996, a period that coincided with the doubling of the workload for the UFO desk staff.

We asked DAS staff how, if they were not included in the distribution of the report, they learned of DIST’s decision. The reply, dated November 23, 2005, stated: “[We] have searched our UFO Policy file for the period and there is no document specifically concerning this issue. [We] can therefore only assume that we were informed by telephone.”

So much for claims that Sec(AS) was the central focal point for all UFO matters within the Ministry of Defence!

UAPs IN THE UK AIR DEFENCE REGION

The report’s Executive Summary opens with this unequivocal statement: “That [UFOs] exist is indisputable. Credited with the ability to hover, land, take-off, accelerate to excep-

~~SECRET UK EYES ONLY~~



LOOSE MINUTE

D/DIST/11/10 196/473

4 December 2000

DCDI
DG(R&T)
ADGE
IFS(RAF) (FS ATC)
HQ MATO (OPS (LF) 1)
AD/DI51

Copy to: AD/DI55

UNIDENTIFIED AERIAL PHENOMENA (UAP) – DI55 REPORT

1. The DIS has received copies of UAP sighting reports from Sec(AS) for about 30 years. Until recently these have been filed with only a cursory look at the contents by DI55 to discover whether anything of intelligence value could be determined. However, it was obvious that any value from the sighting data could only be derived by carrying out a Study of a significant sample of the reports. Consequently, over the past 2 years DI55, under low priority tasking, has compiled a database of information taken from reports received between 1987 and 1997, and has carried out an analysis based on data statistics. A report is now available. With the exception of DG(R&T), who receives the full report, other addressees are being provided with the Executive Summary only, which details the main findings of the Study. Should you require the full report, or parts of it, contact details are given on page 3 of the Summary.

2. The main conclusion of the Study is that the sighting reports provide nothing of value to the DIS in our assessment of threat weapon systems. Taken together with other evidence, we believe that many of the sightings can be explained as: mis-reporting of man-made vehicles; natural but not unusual phenomena, and natural but relatively rare and not completely understood phenomena. It is for these reasons that we have taken the decision to do no further work on the subject and will no longer receive copies of sighting reports.

3. In addition to this major conclusion, however, the study produced subsidiary findings which will be of interest to addressees. The potential explanations of UAP sightings, the characteristics of natural atmospheric phenomena and the consequences of sightings from aircraft will be of interest to those responsible for flight safety. Similarly the characteristics of some of the phenomena with respect to their detection on UKADR systems will be of interest to both the ADGE and flight safety staff. Finally, DG(R&T) will be interested in those phenomena associated with plasma formations, which have potential applications to novel weapon technology.

4. Although we intend to carry out no further work on the subject, we would value any comments you may wish to make on the report. Please direct such comments to AD/DI55. Finally, while most of the report is classified at only RESTRICTED UKEO, we hardly need remind addressees of the media interest in this subject and consequently the sensitivity of the report. Please protect this subject

~~SECRET UK EYES ONLY~~

Fig. 2. DIST minute of December 4, 2000, announcing Condign Report.

UNCLASSIFIED
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accordingly, and discuss the report only with those who have a need to know.

5.40 XXXXXXXXXX
 XXXXX
 DIST
 XXXXXXXXXX

Enclosure:

DCDI, IFS(RAF), HQ MATO, - Executive Summary
UKADGE – Executive Summary and Volume 3
DGR&T, ADI/55, ADI/51 – Executive Summary and Volumes 1,2 and 3

Fig. 2 (continued). DIST minute of December 4, 2000, announcing Condign Report.

tional velocities and vanish, they can reportedly alter their direction of flight suddenly and clearly can exhibit aerodynamic characteristics well beyond those of any known aircraft or missile—either manned or unmanned.”

Throughout the report, Mr. X refers to UFOs as UAPs or Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (see Appendix A for an explanation) and says that, while they most definitely exist, “there is no evidence that any UAP, seen in the UKADR [Air Defence Region] are incursions by air objects of any intelligent (extra-terrestrial or foreign) origin, or that they represent any hostile intent.”

Significantly, drawing upon his access to the contents of the DI55 UFO archive, the author adds: “No artefacts of unknown or unexplained origin have been reported or handed to the UK authorities, despite thousands of UAP reports. There are no SIGINT, ELINT or radiation measurements and little useful video or still IMINT.” SIGINT is signals intelligence, ELINT is electronics intelligence, and IMINT is imagery intelligence.

The study does not attempt to investigate any specific UAP incidents in depth. This disappointing outcome is a direct result of the decision to reduce the “terms of reference” from the original 1993 proposal, which as we have seen did include “a detailed review of specified incidents” within its remit.

THE UAP DATABASE

Mr. X single-handedly input basic data from various time periods covering approximately 25 years into a Microsoft Access computer database. One of these periods spanned 10 years from 1987 to 1997. This span, along with two clusters from 1988 and 1996, were then statistically analyzed, along with the subsequent writing of the substantial 465-page

report, all in just over three years. We requested a processed electronic copy of the Condign UAP database, but the MoD informed us that as it was surplus to requirements it was destroyed shortly after the study ended. However, from Volume 1, Annex D, it’s possible to see what this database looked like. Whether it could or should be reconstructed from MoD records, to follow the train of study, is arguable for important points hereafter.

When eyewitness data is utilized in scientific experiments it is usually obtained by face-to-face interview or other qualitative methods. (The latter is also utilized effectively in law enforcement.) These offer the interviewer other non-leading opportunities to ask the witness to clear up ambiguities, observe traits, and clarify details without many naturally indistinct phrases hindering the process. Some of these could not be picked up on the telephone and therefore subsequent errors arise.

The very quality of data used as the basis of the Condign study is therefore questionable. If a skilled researcher had been employed to follow up samples of reports from the archive, or even to gain a perspective on their reliability, this might have improved its credibility as a source. However, in a statistical analysis involving thousands of reports, without such qualitative sampling, false representations will emerge and these logically will lead to false conclusions. The value of any statistical conclusion or scientific examination rests initially upon how carefully the data were acquired, their quality, and who is doing the research. To be fair to the author, he does at least mention the limitations of statistical analysis in Volume 1, Chapter 3, page 3. Based on the inadequacies of the raw data used in the Condign study, poor data in means poor data out, hence equally poor science.

Volume 1, Chapter 1, page 2 states: “Only UAP in the UK Air Defence Region is used in database analysis, al-

though the support of authoritative scientific reference sources world-wide has been made to come to a considered decision as to the most likely causes of the phenomenon.” In the preface appears the following: “... a rational scientific examination of the phenomena—based only on the raw material—UKADR incident reports.”

In the words of Isaac Koi, a commentator on Condign, “If an analysis is to be performed then it should be performed competently.” Therefore, the question might not only be whether the raw material is sufficient for the task, but was Mr. X qualified to undertake detailed analysis of this type? In his introduction to Volume 1 of the study, the author says, “every effort has been made to take a wide systems approach, to avoid over-focusing on single events.” And he adds, “There has been neither intention of debunking the extraterrestrial lobby or of taking the opposite view—except based on hard scientific evidence.”

Nevertheless, a mere 15 pages later, the extraterrestrial hypothesis is dismissed after data emerged that correlated UAPs with natural phenomena. As a result, the study concludes that an ET origin for the residue of unidentified report is “very unlikely,” and the author adds: “Defence intelligence interests will not [be] furthered by continued investigations which focus on potential extra-terrestrial sources.”

One of the most serious flaws in the report is that in some places the basis on which Mr. X accepts some and rejects other evidence is not apparent from the content presented. We have identified numerous assertions made without reference to evidence or any form of logic. To list those here would be beyond the scope of this article, but it is sufficient to note that there appears to be a large amount of speculation presented in the report as fact.

Volume 2 of the report is a hefty document entitled “Information on Associated Natural and Man-Made Phenomena.” It contains 25 working papers touching upon a variety of important influences upon the UAP data. The categories include:

1. UAP effects on humans, electrical/electronic equipments and objects
2. Ball and bead lightning
3. Potential reasons for higher densities of UAP sightings
4. Afterimages as a result of flashes of light
5. Detection of UAPs by radar
6. Exotic technologies
7. Sightline rules of flying objects and meteorites
8. Rarity of UAP sound reports
9. Black and other aircraft programs as UAP events
10. Ley lines, earthlights, and UK faultlines
11. Collected imagery and classification of UAP shapes
12. Earth’s magnetic field in the UKADR
13. Visual meteorological and other natural phenomena
14. Meteorological balloons

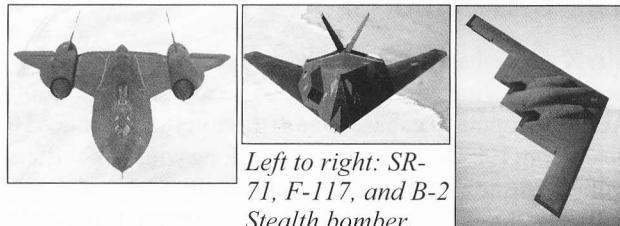
15. Airships and hot-air balloons
16. Sunspot, aurora, and seismic correlations
17. Visual observation of satellites
18. Projected shapes/shadows, fluorescence, and luminescence
19. Charged dust aerosols
20. Optical mirages
21. Ionospheric plasma
22. Artifacts
23. Linked vortex rings
24. Sprites, elves, and blue jets
25. Overview of magnetic-field effects on humans

Most of the alleged scientific sources mentioned form the basis of the working papers in Volume 2, and it is precisely these that represent likely causes for UAPs and related phenomena. None of these phenomena are unknown to science. In fact, probably a number of readers might confidently agree that all of the above *might* be responsible for proportions of initially reported UFO sightings that have been explained as misperceptions of man-made and natural phenomena. The question remains: Do the working papers cover all possibilities and could their attendant phenomena and circumstance be responsible for *all* UAPs or UFOs and related phenomena? The simple answer is no. We believe there is room for other possibilities. Essentially Condign doesn’t consider or mention all possible causes of UAP or UFO sightings. We’ll leave the reader to fill in any blanks.

More extraordinarily, in order to reach conclusions, as far as we know this “scientific” examination was completed without undertaking any consultation with scientists in the relevant fields connected with the working papers. Nor do we have reason to suppose this report was externally sent out for scientific scrutiny. The secrecy factor is very pertinent here and demonstrates how and why most of this exercise was ineffective.

BLACK PROJECTS

One important category of influence listed in Volume 2 of Condign is black aircraft programs. Working Paper 9, classified as “NATO Restricted,” opens with the statement, “It is acknowledged that some UAP reports can be attributed to covert aircraft programmes—in which unusual air vehicles may be seen, either at the experimental stage or in service.” The paper proceeds to describe a number of black project shapes that it says are “frequently reported as UAPs.” Those illustrated include both UAVs and three manned U.S. projects: the 2,000-mph SR-71



Left to right: SR-71, F-117, and B-2 Stealth bomber.

Blackbird, the F-117, and B-2 Stealth bomber. A 14-line description of Program 2 and a 10-line description of Program 3 have both been withheld under Section 27 of the FOIA on the grounds that it was supplied in confidence by “another nation.” This exemption is justified on the grounds that “release . . . is likely to prejudice the future exchange of such information and may also damage the UK’s relationship with that nation.”

In addition, the names of both black programs have been withheld along with two photographs that accompany the text. However, in Working Paper 6 (“Exotic Technologies”) appears the line, “The projected (USAF) priority plan is to produce unpiloted air-breathing aircraft with a Mach 8-12 capability and transatmospheric vehicles . . . as well as highly supersonic vehicles at Mach 4 to 6.”

This intriguing reference has led a number of British media outlets, including BBC *Newshight* and the London *Guardian*, to speculate that one of the withheld photographs might be a picture of the infamous Aurora. There has been much speculation about the existence and capabilities of this supposed hypersonic black project since the early 1990s. While the U.S. authorities have denied such an aircraft exists, sightings of unusual aircraft shapes have added to rumors that a secret aircraft exists that is capable of flying at up to Mach 8. In summary, Mr. X notes that from “certain viewing aspects . . . these vehicles may be described as ‘saucer like’—hence they are not ignored by observers—as more conventional and familiar aircraft shapes would be.”

PLASMAS, PLASMOIDS, AND EM EFFECTS

The study found that while it could rule out aliens and hostile foreign aircraft, it could not fully account for some of the stranger UAP events. These reports, many of which are made by credible witnesses, “are almost certainly attributable to physical, electrical and magnetic phenomena in the atmosphere, mesosphere and ionosphere” created by “more than one set of weather and electrically charged conditions.”

Mr. X goes even further by drawing upon the controversial research and conclusions of research carried out at Laurentian University by Michael Persinger. He finds merit in the theory that plasmas or earthlights may explain a range of close-encounter and even “alien abduction” experiences. The report says that on rare occasions plasmas can cause responses in the temporal-lobe area of the human brain, leading observers to suffer extended memory retention and repeat experiences. This, the report’s author believes, may be “a key factor in influencing the more extreme reports . . . [that] are clearly believed by the victims.”

We should stress that we do not accept these speculations as being scientifically valid explanations of the close-encounter experience. Though EM and other cortex stimulation effects on humans may provide clues towards the origin of some aspects of alleged abduction phenomena elements, we are not aware that any plasmas or “transients”

such as those described by Persinger have ever been detected or measured in the environment, nor do we know of any stimuli present in the environment capable of producing all such reported effects.

There is a limited but growing body of research into various alleged environmental EM and other pollution effects on humans, animals, and plants covering a number of manmade and other natural emission sources. However, these require investigation in long-term studies in order that data can be established and some real scientific consensus to develop. Until then, this field will remain curious and controversial, replete with boastful and biased commentary from its extremes.

A limited Google search on the influence of microwave mobile phone, relay, and transmitter pollution effects on humans reveals the polarized nature of discourse on the controversy. On one side are companies who promote the emission or transmission technology. They claim it is perfectly safe and there is no evidence that any humans have been harmed by exposure. On the other extreme are people who claim they or their children have developed everything from electrohypersensitivity to leukemia as a result of proximity to ground waves from microwave relay masts (in rare cases, either individually or in consortium, litigation is involved).

Unfortunately, scientific groundwork that is independent and unbiased is rare or difficult to locate. Often it is impossible to establish the objective facts when so much material is lost in an electronic fog. The best we can say is yes, radiation affects people, but no one really knows yet exactly to what extent, or who may be more or less sensitive.

Besides noctilucent clouds and auroral displays that may explain some UFOs, there are other dusty plasmas in the Earth environment that may cause rare types of visual luminescent phenomena that can be reported as UFOs. However, until proper scientific detection and measurement occur these explanations must remain only hypothetical. As mentioned in the report, ball lightning produced in a laboratory is just one example of one such unproven possibility.

Since the report was released we have approached more than 40 scientists from different nationalities and across a range of disciplines to obtain expert comment and opinion on the findings of the Condign study. Approximately two-thirds were plasma physicists. Many are unwilling to be publicly associated with the topic in any shape or form. Here we have a perfect example of the shyness often ascribed to scientists in the past when they are asked to contribute a critique of a so-called scientific assessment of UFOs. However, on a positive note, and despite requests for anonymity we have been provided with comments, useful references, and suggestions. The process is ongoing and we intend to persist in our efforts to involve pertinently qualified scientists in a comprehensive review of all the Condign documents.

(continued on page 29)

THE CORE PHENOMENON AND THE SECONDARY PHENOMENON

BY JEROME CLARK

If UFO sightings existed in a vacuum—in other words, without competing, comparably peculiar claims littered profusely throughout the long history of human testimony—the hypothesis that extraterrestrial visitors have found their way to earth in the past century or two would be far easier to advance. Actually, once contrary debunking counterexplanations had been disposed of, it would be all but unavoidable.

Things, of course, are nowhere that simple. The world has always burst at its seams with weird stuff which appears to challenge officially sanctioned knowledge. Ufology (not to mention CUFOS) came to be because after World War II flying saucers sounded like a signal—maybe a very distinct signal—newly beamed from the constant background static of extraordinary claims. To most of those who took the reports seriously, that “distinct signal” was thought to herald the sudden presence of intruders from interplanetary or interstellar space.

To those who didn’t take the reports seriously, the saucers were irksomely familiar, just the usual tiresome nonsense in fresh, irritatingly invigorated iteration. The particular form that ridicule adapted spoke to an issue that would bedevil ufologists to this day. The first accounts of saucer sightings had barely rolled off the presses before scoffers were linking saucers to monsters, fairies, ghosts, and other fringe phenomena that all serious persons knew to be too fantastic and absurd to consider. Readily identifiable as the hoary practice known as guilt by association—and later institutionalized by professional anomaly bashers such as Martin Gardner, author of the hugely influential *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science* (New York: Dover, 1957), which places UFOs in the company of various outlandish heresies and swindles—the derision was predictable, in some ways empty, but not entirely meaningless.

Jerome Clark, an editor of *IUR*, is author of the multivolume *UFO Encyclopedia* (1990–1998), *Unnatural Phenomena* (2005), and other books.

The first great modern anomalist, Charles Fort (1874–1932), was also the first writer to propose a comprehensive theory of interplanetary visitation. Fort forged that theory out of more than reports of aerial oddities, though (as we all know) he was *the* pioneer, creating ufology nearly three decades before culture embraced the concept of alien flying objects. His own restless reading of yellowed newspapers and scientific journals had informed him that strange shapes in the atmosphere and beyond were not the sole weirdness infesting the world.

Rather than present his findings as samples of random oddities, he incorporated them—his often tongue-in-cheek prose masking genuine conviction—into a vision of extra-terrestrial wayfarers engaged in all kinds of baffling activities: dropping organic and inorganic substances out of the blue, seeding the earth with mysterious archaeological artifacts, causing persons and vessels to vanish, and—not incidentally—all the while being mistaken for ghosts, demons, gods, fairies, and ocean-going saurians.

As press accounts from early July 1947 record, Forteans—aware that flying saucers were not quite the novel phenomenon naïve journalists, witnesses, and the public generally thought them to be—immediately connected the objects with the otherworldly visitors Fort had written about. By temperament Forteans tended to be mystery-mongers and heterodox thinkers. Unlike, say, Project Sign personnel, they did not judge the extraterrestrial possibility to owe just to UFO sightings, nor did they think that such sightings were the only odd things happening on the planet.

The first magazine to feature saucer material in virtually every issue, *Fate* (whose initial issue saw print less than a year after Arnold’s encounter), also covered Fortean and psychic occurrences and engaged in freewheeling occult-tinged speculation. It covered N. Meade Layne and his San Diego-based Borderline Sciences Research Associates, which propounded the esoteric doctrine of etheric realms to which all manner of anomalous appearances, including “ether ships” (UFOs),



Charles Fort

could be traced. Most readers probably read *Fate*'s contents indiscriminately, in the implicit assumption that one "true mystery" is as good as another.

Not all early ufologists agreed. If they had, there would have been no entity named "ufology." Many ufologists devoted their entire (or at least published) attention to UFOs, looking back at Fort for historical perspective on aerial-phenomena reports. Virtually alone of his 1950s contemporaries, on the other hand, M. K. Jessup addressed Fortean anomalies directly and, like Fort, incorporated them into an eccentric—less charitably: crank—theory of UFO visitation.¹ Jessup insipidly conceived of sky falls as the consequence of spills or drops from saucer hydroponics tanks, and his ruminations about the relationship of archaeological artifacts and mysterious disappearances to UFOs were no more richly inspired.

In the 1960s, all-encompassing paranormal speculations challenged the ETH. There were two strains: John Keel's (and subsequently Gordon Creighton's) crude demonology and Jacques Vallee's more elegant effort to incorporate UFO experiences into broader, older traditions of supernatural belief and experience. Whatever their other differences, both approaches implicitly assumed that UFOs are not a discrete phenomenon, just one aspect of a multifaceted generating mechanism. A disciple of Layne and Trevor James Constable, Keel identified that mechanism as the etheric realm (which he renamed the "superspectrum"), populated by fierce and treacherous forces. Vallee called the mechanism the "control system" and left it more or less at that. In later years theorists such as Janet and Colin Bord, Patrick Harpur, Kenneth Ring, Peter Rojcewicz, and Michael Grosso put forth their own variations on these themes.

In due course more conservative, ETH-oriented ufologists pushed back, arguing that paranormal theories amounted to little more than magical thinking which could only relegate ufology even further to the fringes. Moreover, such theories failed to address such hard-core evidence as instrumented observations, radar/visuals, and landing traces. These critics insisted that only concentrated scientific attention to incidents of this kind could resolve the UFO question, citing, for example, the Trans-en-Provence case with its impressively documented anomalous effects apparently tied to an unknown, advanced technology. The debate fostered a strange alliance as debunkers and paranormalists joined forces to decree that the ETH is a priori impossible, the plaything of fools and credophiles. Though this was and is an argument of dubious merit, it does underscore the curious emotionality of some anti-ETH polemicists.

EVENTS AND THEIR EXPERIENTIAL CORRELATES

If a comprehensive ETH, one that embraces everything from radar-tracked daylight discs and laboratory-documented physical traces on one side to hairy bipeds and even more esoteric entities on the other, seems a tall order, perhaps it

may be wise to think of a "core phenomenon" and a "secondary phenomenon." The former is the "traditional" UFO phenomenon, which is to say the thing, commencing with the CE2/radar-visual and all such imply, that runs in an ostensibly straight line from the Arnold era to the present, the phenomenon that—as far as we can judge from the limited evidence available to us (in good part because of science's neglect of eminently investigable data)—comprises structured craft with extraordinary performance characteristics and humanlike and humanoid crews. (Whether the latter are abducting human beings in the many thousands is another matter, one we shall not take up here.)

The core phenomenon is an *event* phenomenon, the secondary phenomenon an *experience* one. In other words, the former is something that can be, or potentially can be, shown to have happened in consensus reality. ("Potentially" in this context means, for instance, alleged landing traces which await proper scrutiny in the laboratory.) In the latter category, encounters and observations are experientially real—in other words, have the resonance of the genuinely perceived and lived—but are otherwise unprovable.

Experience anomalies are open-ended. Almost anything can be "seen," though cultural traditions play a large, in some ways determining, role in shaping their particular content. In experience, individuals perceive supernatural or at least unlikely entities like fairies, merbeings, angels, gods, and monsters. Credibility of these "observations" depends on witness sincerity (and sanity, obviously) and on the specific circumstances of the incident. It goes without saying that something unusual perceived up close in broad daylight is more likely to be genuinely anomalous than something glimpsed ambiguously in the distance at night.

Let us be clear here: These are not hallucinations by any conventional definition. These encounters are truly, profoundly mysterious, and their cause or stimulus is unknown (thus the only conventionalist option is to ascribe them all to misperception, lies, and mental disorders sometimes invented on the spot for the purpose). Yet, to all available appearances, sincere witnesses and good viewing conditions that enhance confidence in the anomalousness of the observation do not translate into anything that transcends testimony and memory.² We barely have a vocabulary with which to discuss such matters, though perhaps "visionary" comes closest, even if it is merely descriptive and not, as some presume, explanatory.

Experience anomalies, protean in nature, are variable, changing over time and geography. In transitional historical and cultural periods, they may fuse motifs in curious ways. One dramatic episode from the early 20th century melds at least three elements.

The incident allegedly took place—contemporary press accounts are vague about the date—sometime in June 1907. "Near the Dikeman springs," somewhere in Tennessee (the story was first published in the *Nashville Tennessean*), one Walter Stephenson was resting on a log after an exhausting hunt with his hounds. His eye fell upon a speck—a kite, he

judged—toward the eastern horizon. He looked away but soon heard a whirring sound which caused him to see that the object, now almost directly overhead, was no kite but a “huge balloon . . . of a pattern he had never in his life before seen.” As it circled overhead a few times, eerily lovely music could be heard emanating from it. Soon the airship landed, and “strange people” stepped out of the car, “which was closely curtained with a substance that fairly glistened in the sunshine that burst through the obscuring clouds.” The ship’s occupants—the published account implies that their faces were covered without stating so directly—walked to the spring and knelt there as if in prayer for a minute or so.

Stephenson watched them from a short distance. When their apparent worship ritual was over, he asked the strangers who they were and why they were here. One of the crew lifted a veil, revealing the “benign face of a lady,” who asked him—in German—if he had prayed. “Instantly,” the press account reports, “all were aboard, the airship rose, circled about for a minute or more, and was gone in a westerly direction. Mr. Stephenson states that the incident left an impression upon him that he can never forget, and while he knows that it was some human invention, it looked and the music sounded more like that of angels than of mortals.”

If experience anomalies adapt themselves to a culture’s idea of supernatural or extraordinary encounters, this one conjures up divine entities (angels and even, by one reading, the Blessed Virgin Mary), secret airship pilots, and—looking forward—UFOs in the modern sense.³ Notions of extraordinary encounters in some instances may also, of course, have as their inspiration the sorts of real, this-world encounters whose contents are sufficiently exotic and enigmatic as to border on the fantastical.

Though poorly understood, ball lightning is a no longer disputed physical occurrence, but it has its correlates in the liminal zone of anomalous experience. The sociologist James McClenon has noted that an “effect that occurred during an electrical storm would be termed ‘ball lightning.’ . . . Other cases with the exact same appearance but occurring in other circumstances would be called UFOs, psychic lights, or will-o’-the-wisps.” In such contexts balls of light may act purposefully, as if endowed with intelligence and able to perform fantastic feats such as (in the testimony of one individual McClenon interviewed) the opening of and passing through locked windows.⁴

Ball lightning was once as outré, and for some of the same reasons, as UFOs and cryptozoological entities such as Sasquatch. The “core phenomenon” of ball lightning is known even as it spins off secondary, profoundly anomalous experiential phenomena. Could one day UFOs—the products of an advanced technology created (one presumes) in other solar systems—and Sasquatch—a race of (biological) hominids, the product of evolutionary processes, cousins to humankind, and intelligent enough to conceal themselves in the vast wilderness of the Pacific Northwest—be documented and accepted as this-world phenomena, spinning off their own secondary correlates in the form of bizarre high-

strangeness experiences (with UFOs, abductions, men in black, and beyond; with Sasquatch, paranormal bipeds in Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Missouri, and just about everywhere else)?

The answer is, obviously, that we don’t know. Still, the separation of some classes of anomalies into two superficially alike but in fact unrelated ontological categories may prove inescapable.

FOOTNOTES

1. Jessup was an early proponent of what would be called “ancient astronauts” as Erich Von Däniken rose to prominence nearly two decades later. In Jessup’s unique reading, however, the ancient astronauts were earthborn pygmies who developed a supertechnology, prominently including levitation, and traveled into space. Currently, they reside in a giant space station in the “gravity neutral” zone between the earth and the moon, though they also maintain lunar bases on the latter. As far as I can determine, Jessup persuaded precisely nobody that any of this is true.

2. That is true even when—in exceedingly rare circumstances—fully funded scientific resources are brought to bear on high-strangeness phenomena, as Colm A. Kelleher and George Knapp report in their very interesting *Hunt for the Skinwalker* (2005). A remote ranch in northeastern Utah was reportedly the site of appearances by UFOs, weird structures, enigmatic lights, bizarre animals, invisible entities, and more. Scientists and researchers witnessed some of these things themselves, but attempts to document the appearances instrumentally proved fruitless. The project ended, as it began, with strange anecdotes.

3. For other examples of early UFOs-in-the-making, see my “Enigma Variations: Proto-UFOs and Other Strangeness,” *IUR* 28:2 (2003).

4. *Deviant Science: The Case of Parapsychology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984): 60–63. ♦

SCHUESSLER RETIRES AS MUFON HEAD

After serving two three-year terms as international director of the Mutual UFO Network, John Schuessler will retire effective November 1. He announced his retirement at the annual MUFON business board meeting in July. Schuessler’s statement appears on the MUFON website: “Finally, after thorough deliberation, the board concluded that my successor should be James Carrion of Bellvue, Colorado. This decision was made by examining the needs of MUFON, where our strategic plan was aiming to take the organization in the future and how well James’s background matched the MUFON needs.” Kristen Kennington will take over the office operations. As of November 1, the address will be: Mutual UFO Network, P.O. Box 279, Bellvue, CO 80512-0279; (970) 221-1836; fax (970) 221-1209.

TOM TOWERS: THE OTHER AL CHOP

BY ROBERT BARROW

Tom Towers (died approx. 1991), once a popular Los Angeles newspaper writer who also starred in one major motion picture and eventually became an executive assistant at what is now LAX Airport, served as an Army Air Force intelligence officer during WW II.

A few years after the war, the former AAF Captain Towers landed a reporter's job at the old *Los Angeles Examiner*, a position he held from 1947 to 1959. In addition to general reporting, Towers also wrote frequently about aviation as a senior member of the Aviation Writers Association, and perhaps his interest in flying related to his single shot at an acting career.

The United Artists movie *Unidentified Flying Objects*, also known simply as *UFO*, appeared in theaters throughout the United States, England, and other countries in May 1956 (see *IUR* 30:2). This Clarence Greene–Russell Rouse production, a documentary, accurately recreated the early days of the official U.S. government UFO investigation in the late 1940s and early 1950s. However, as plans were underway for filming in 1955, a lead actor was needed to play the key role of Albert M. Chop, once chief of the Air Force's press section, who gradually changed from ardent skeptic to believing that UFOs were real, with intelligence behind their control.

For Greene and Rouse, their choice of Towers to play the role of Al Chop may have been predictable. Earlier, a publicity agent for a small Hollywood film company, Popkin Productions, had noticed Towers in the *Examiner* city room and thought him an excellent choice for the producers' film *The Well*, in which he could play the important role of a deputy sheriff. Unfortunately for Towers, his reluctant city editor didn't feel he could approve a leave of absence requiring several weeks, and the conflict of vacation schedules at the newspaper would further scuttle a chance at acting.

Months later, however, opportunity came knocking when plans for *UFO* emerged. Al Chop already knew

Robert Barrow began researching UFOs as a teenager in 1963. His articles and book reviews appeared in The A.P.R.O. Bulletin, Pursuit, Argosy UFO, True Flying Saucers & UFOs, Official UFO, and newspapers and magazines.

Towers through their roles in writing and public relations, respectively, and Chop recommended Towers for the role. After a few meetings with the producers and his editors at the *Examiner*, a three-week leave was allowed so Towers could make the movie.

Towers eventually left the newspaper in 1959 on a year's leave of absence to establish the Los Angeles Sound Abatement Coordinating Committee at Los Angeles International Airport. The committee convened to deal with community protests caused by jet-engine noise, a rapidly growing problem as the jet age began to flourish commercially. His leave was extended every six months until January 1962 when the *Examiner* ceased publication. Towers soon gained employment with the Los Angeles Department of Airports that July and remained there into at least the late 1970s (and perhaps the 1980s), becoming executive assistant.

His newspaper career, far beyond his acting stint, seemed fascinating in itself. Towers recalled in the 1970s: "At the start of my newspaper career with the *Examiner* I worked as a general assignment reporter. I covered many major crime stories, some of which were identified with the rise and fall of local Mafia-type gangsters.

"At the start of the Korean War, I was assigned to write a weekly aviation column entitled *Aviation News*. I was given this task because of my World War II background in the Air Force . . . and later as a group public information officer," he related. Towers's title became aviation editor and he kept the position when the newspaper's regular aviation editor was dispatched to Korea to cover training and war operations. After Korea, the editor returned, but Towers kept the Sunday column assignment, writing airline and general aviation stories, plus aerospace pieces about missiles.

"When the jet age started in January 1959, I wrote several critical aviation columns about jet noise, and I suspect this is why I was hired away from the *Examiner* and asked to set up the Sound Abatement Coordinating Committee at International Airport," he explained.

Towers no longer wrote for any publications ("No time"), but hoped to develop story ideas about the airport. He recalled the newspaper business fondly: "I broke into the newspaper business after World War II as editor/reporter

for a weekly newspaper in Big Bear Lake, California, where I gained some notoriety by writing a story that broke up the revival of the Ku Klux Klan in southern California."

When this interview was conducted in the late 1970s, Towers was acting as executive assistant to the general manager of the Los Angeles Department of Airports (then known as #1 World Way), and also served as legislative liaison to the city council, where he appeared before various committees on matters pertaining to the department's oversight of three airports—International Airport, Van Nuys Airport, and the Ontario International Airport. He also monitored aviation/airport legislation coming before the state legislature at Sacramento, remaining current on bills and offering testimony on the department's behalf.

In the early 1950s, Towers never suspected that the major movie role in *UFO* was headed his way, a performance destined to be seen all over the world. The documentary played in European movie houses with subtitles, Towers recalled, "and a friend with United Airlines saw the film while visiting in some little town in Greece."

"At the outset," he continued, "I had no particular views on UFOs, but I was elated and pleased to be selected to play the lead role." Production costs were low budget all the way, under \$200,000, he believed, and he furnished almost his entire wardrobe. He provided his own auto for highway scenes, with filming accomplished under strict security to prevent competing studios from stealing ideas and rushing their own UFO movies into theaters. Towers humorously recalled that he had his own dressing room—a men's room.

He held no opinion about UFOs at that time, "but as a

newsman, I was interested in the sightings, as reported by reputable observers."

"But," he cautioned, "I had no time or patience for those who attempted to capitalize on the phenomenon, such as the crowd that gathered at Giant Rock in San Bernardino County, California, and tried to sell the media and public on UFO gimmickry and quackery." Reflecting upon events portrayed in *UFO*, Towers felt them legitimate and reported by trustworthy observers: "And I still feel that qualified UFO observers, such as FAA traffic controllers and airline pilots, must be believed. If one cannot believe a qualified air traffic controller or a qualified airline pilot," he asks, "who can you believe?"

By the 1970s, Towers confessed reading about UFO sightings with interest but had no involvement with the subject, although he observed that when UFO stories appeared on the news, his movie seemed to show up with increased frequency on TV outlets. Numerous aviation contacts kept him informed of movie airings on TV: "Recently, Channel 11 in L.A. showed *UFO* at 6:00 p.m.—not bad for a film that, nowadays, seems to find existence only in the late evening hours." Around the same time, an American Airlines pilot friend informed him that Channel 5 in New York City also presented the movie. "When the film was active in theaters I was often stopped on the street by strangers and asked to comment. Today, friends and acquaintances bring up the subject as a matter of light conversation . . . always in a light vein." As a writer, Towers had numerous conversations with people who maintained an avid UFO interest.

Following the release of *UFO*, no further motion picture offers pursued Towers, though he believes that if the film had achieved the success it missed he might have attempted a film and TV career. In fact, *UFO* producer Clarence Greene told him he should have stayed in the business because TV needed actors for police shows and the like.

Despite the documentary status of the movie, there were many Hollywood touches involved throughout production. Towers thoughtfully related an anecdote familiar to the industry:

"At the former *Hollywood Citizen News*, we shot a remote scene in the paper's city room or thereabouts. I had suggested to one of the minor players that he do the scene this way or that . . . of course, this is the director's job, not mine. But I felt that as an active newsman, I knew a bit about how reporters move and act inside a newspaper city room.

"The director (Winston Jones) said nothing at that time, but later told me this story: Famed director John Ford was



Still RG-32

This scene, from "Unidentified Flying Objects" (*UFO*), a recreation of a true incident, portrays Pentagon Press Specialist Al Chop (Tom Towers) with U.S. Airforce Intelligence Officers as they watch top secret photos of flying saucers in this United Artists release coming to the Theatre on

Publicity photo from the original 1956 United Artists press book, with Tom Towers's name spelled correctly. Towers is at far left.

once making a movie and some actor told another actor how to play a scene. Ford said nothing, but after the luncheon break he did not come back to the set. All hands were standing around, waiting to get direction. Money was being wasted at a great pace.

"The producers went into a rage and someone finally found Ford in some remote part of the set. When asked why production had not started after the luncheon break, Ford told the producers that he felt he wasn't needed anymore since actor _____ had taken over his work as a director. Of course, this problem was corrected forthwith and Ford went back to work as the film's director.

"Needless to say," Towers continued, "I got the point and from that moment I ceased to offer any advice to anyone as to how to play a scene."

Shooting time for Towers's scenes took about three weeks, Monday through Friday, except Greene and Rouse did send the lead actor on a weekend trip to Washington, D.C., for some exterior shots at the Pentagon.

In his portrayal of Al Chop, Towers viewed the famous Montana and Utah UFO films, and the objects reminded him of bouncing tennis balls. "However," he added, "I had no reason to doubt the veracity or the reliability of those who took the films. I think the fact that they did not remind anyone of 'flying saucers' might have been somewhat of an upsetting factor for some UFO buffs."

A highlight of his participation in the motion picture was Towers's opportunity to meet former Project Blue Book chief Edward J. Ruppelt. "Ed Ruppelt impressed me as a very kind man and one who was totally objective and truthful in his UFO work," remembered Towers. "I did not know him very well, but on the few occasions we did talk, he impressed me as a reliable person. All my meetings with Ruppelt were in conjunction with the making of 'UFO.' I did not meet him prior to this."

Two decades after the movie's production, Towers's interests included his airport position and fitness activities such as golf, tennis, and bowling, his only contact with UFOs being what he read in newspapers or watched on TV. Occasionally, he noted, technical publications crossing his desk mentioned UFOs. But back in the 1950s, Towers was involved with UFOs in other ways after Clarence Greene's documentary film saw release.

A copy of the *Examiner* dated January 20, 1957, features his *Aviation News* column and carries a story headlined, "About Saucers and Sen. Russell's Letter." The letter was dated January 17, 1956, and was sent to Towers by Georgia Senator Richard B. Russell Jr. (1897–1971), chairman of the Committee on Armed Services. Towers had requested information concerning a UFO sighting Russell reportedly made in Europe (see *IUR* 25:1). After learning of the incident from a reliable Pentagon source, Towers wanted permission to break the story in his column. The senator's reply dashed Towers's hopes to print the sighting, as evidenced in a portion of Russell's response: "I received your letter but I have discussed this matter with the affected

agencies of the Government, and they are of the opinion that it is not wise to publicize this matter at this time."

Maybe he didn't get the story he desired, but Towers retaliated by raising further questions about UFOs and government secrecy, accomplished simply by printing Sen. Russell's letter.

Nor did Towers remain dormant throughout the steady procession of UFO lectures and meetings pervading Los Angeles in the 1950s. At a meeting held at Baces Hall on August 8, 1957, he personally introduced famous broadcaster Frank Edwards to an audience of 500, and there was at least one gathering hosted by UFO writer Max B. Miller attended by Towers, perhaps in conjunction with the movie.

Until the mid-1970s, Towers was hounded by one annoying regret: Hardly any publications spelled his name correctly, listing him perpetually as Tom Powers. Complicating matters, there was already a Hollywood actor named Tom Powers. *TV Guide* and the *Los Angeles Times* were among the guilty parties, but were hardly alone in the error. As this writer was contacting *TV Guide* to plea for a correction (successfully), Towers was writing United Artists for an explanation. Apparently, replied they, the original UA press book for *UFO* misspelled Towers as "Powers" on one page, and for years a publicity paper circulated by the studio listed his name with a P.

Tom Towers never saw a UFO ("No sightings that would qualify as UFOs"), but that isn't to suggest the UFO subject didn't cross his mind in later years: "When a missile is fired at Vandenberg Air Force Base on the California coast, and the contrails spread out over the western sky, I often think about UFOs," he admitted. "But that's as far as it goes."

Editor's note: Much of the information in this article was provided to writer Robert Barrow via personal communication with Towers in the 1970s. ♦

THE STORY

(Not for Publication)

When Albert Chop (Tom Powers) first reported to work on the Public Information office desk of Air Material Command, he was skeptical about "this flying saucer business" despite the reports of sightings and the death of Captain Mantell, in 1948, while chasing a flying saucer.

Later, after Chop had been transferred to the Press Section in the Pentagon, he learned from Major Dewey Fournet of Air Force Intelligence that they had actual motion pictures of UFO's. These pictures, together with those taken earlier by a business man on vacation were classified as "Not balloons, not aircraft and not birds—but 'Unknowns'."

When, in 1952 the Unknowns moved in over Washington, D.C., and Chop together with radar experts saw them on the radar screen, and interceptor jets made visual contact, his skepticism disappeared. He was further impressed when General Samford stated that there were "Credible Observers of Relatively Incredible Things."

From then on the only questions in Chop's mind was What are they? and Where do they come from?

The 1956
UA press
book spells
Towers's
name wrong
in the plot
summary.

Running Time: 92 minutes

STRANGE DAYS

BY MICHAEL D. SWORDS

In this article, I explore some suspicious activities that led to George Hunt Williamson (GHW) meeting with George Adamski for the famous Desert Center encounter with Orthon the Venusian. My intent is to suggest that some outside meddling may have been involved with all this, although that can't be proven.

Some years ago, UFO bookseller extraordinaire Bob Girard acquired the Williamson papers. Mark Rodeghier, Jerome Clark, and I felt that although Williamson was a contactee, he was second only to Adamski in his impact on the field, and was perhaps more interesting (and certainly far more creative). Therefore, his papers were worth preserving and making available, per CUFOS policy. Accordingly, I paid Girard's asking price, and I now maintain the GHW files. Any responsible researcher is welcome to study them.

The files reveal Williamson as an extremely unusual and nearly indescribable character. I'd start by saying he was a high-energy dreamer, and go on with naïve, fun-loving, adventuresome, risk-taking, hyperactive, and a three-impossible-things-before-breakfast kind of guy, permeated with a very thin borderline between fantasy and reality. But he was also intelligent and creative, with the memory of a supercomputer, and living in a model of reality that was way too large for his, or my, sanity. So to say GHW is "interesting" is the least of it.

Williamson became famous because he was the most cited witness to Adamski's blockbuster Orthon claim—the footprints in the desert sand with extraterrestrial symbols on them, and all of that. He then went on to pour literature (including six books) and lectures into the UFO stewpot for the remainder of the 1950s. How Williamson ended up meeting Adamski for the big UFO encounter is what I will try to unravel. To me, it reeks of a setup of some type,

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masterminded by very earthly forces.

One caution: When Bob Girard sold me the files, he had separately sold off a valuable part of them—the file folders specifically labeled "George Adamski." This, as much as I honor Bob and what he has done for the field, is probably tragic. It almost certainly has created a hole of terrible significance for the understanding of the two Georges. Because the buyer of the files demands anonymity, this cannot be remedied by the simple solution of photocopying the documents. If, by any chance, the buyer/collector is reading this, you would be doing a great service to scholars of Adamski and contactees if you'd be willing to have the material duplicated for the GHW collection. But, that said, fragments of these materials are scattered about in other files that did make it to Kalamazoo, and I will attempt to put the pieces together for you here.



Orthon the Venusian

BEFORE ORTHON

The Orthon event occurred on November 20, 1952. We need to drop into the life of Williamson about one year earlier to begin our story. In the winter of 1951, GHW was just getting into flying saucers. He hadn't yet become overly interested in them. His mind was swirling with anthropological and spiritual concepts, often immersed in what he *really* loved—American Indian lore and culture. It was in pursuit of the latter, and aided by his convictions that involved in all this was the intrusion of the profoundly spiritual, that he left the University of Arizona (probably flunking out after a couple of years, plus some time at two other schools), and bolted for Chippewa country in Minnesota. In doing so, he left his wife Betty (who *did* graduate so far as I can tell) doing more formal field work in Arizona (with the Hopi or Navaho, or both).

George began hearing tales from the Chippewa that sounded to him a bit like UFO stories, but involving spiritual agents from beyond. He considered himself a channeling medium, so spirits from beyond were fine with him. Then, synchronistically, he read, of all things, Donald Keyhoe's

The Flying Saucers are Real (Fawcett, 1950). Well, that did it. GHW was now wild for UFOs. And, to him, UFOs were obviously tied in somehow to Indian lore, Spiritualism, and the wisdom to guide humanity.

In the spring of 1952, he returned to Prescott, Arizona, near his parent's home and the Yavapai Indian Reservation. Betty joined him, also fired up about Indian lore, spirits, and UFOs, and they read all they could grab on the subject and made local contacts with similarly interested persons. Somehow they heard about a Winslow, Arizona, resident named Alfred C. Bailey, who was said to have the same suite of interests, though with more of an emphasis on the anthropological and ufological, and less on the spiritual. They tried to correspond with Bailey in June 1952, but he didn't respond right away. Two months later he did get in touch, and Alfred and his wife agreed to meet at GWH's home in Prescott (a not insignificant drive). The meeting was a pretty odd first encounter.

The Williamsons were in their mid- to early twenties, and the Baileys much older (probably in their forties or thereabouts). Al Bailey introduced himself as a conductor for the Santa Fe railroad with an interest in chiropractic, ancient wisdom, and other strange matters. Betty Bailey was the reticent member of the foursome and actually uncomfortable at some points in the get-together.

After much talk of UFOs and ancient civilizations, and a good dinner, our boy George suggested some after-dinner party games with a homemade Ouija board. Betty seems not to have taken very well to that, but Al jumped in with George. It appears to have been a two-man game with a recorder (probably Betty Williamson). The men would lightly place their fingers on a clear, upturned water glass, and it would slide around the board, stopping at letters or numbers and delivering its message from beyond. Although George describes this as a party game, everyone should realize that he never thought of any such "communication" unseriously. It was *all* big stuff to him.

George reports on this August 2 Ouija communication at some length in his and Bailey's book, *The Saucers Speak!* (New Age, 1954). In order for the glass to move around the board, either Williamson or Bailey had to push it—I'll leave it to you to decide whether they do it by their own devices or whether some outer-space intelligences are doing it for them (my views on this should shortly be clear). They have a long, probably wearying session, which sounds suspiciously like rock 'n' roll GHW—all manner of esoteric jazz, anthropological ancient-culture references, stoppages to define what GHW already knows, and allusions to bell-shaped saucers. (George Adamski had already written about these in "I Photographed Space Ships," *Fate*, July 1951, pp. 64–74.) Near the end of the messages, "someone" breaks in and suggests they stop for a while and get some food. (I

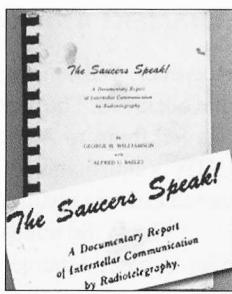
believe that Bailey was hungry.) Williamson, with his unlimited capacity for self-deception, takes this last message in stride as a demonstration of how wonderfully human and humorous the intelligences are.

When they return from the food break, GHW is ready for another Ouija session. This is his medium, after all; Bailey has had only the first lesson about the "game." But right off the bat something very un-George comes through: the suggestion that this Ouija board thing isn't very efficient and that they should try to make their contacts via radio. "We can reach you in this manner," say the intelligences. This (radio) is definitely *not* George's game. The evening's messages go on in a GHW manner, but at the end he has no way to pursue the suggestion. Unsurprisingly (to me), Bailey says he'll look into it, and after the Baileys returned to Winslow, he does.

There are a few further Ouija sessions (GHW admits in the files that not all the Ouija nor the radio transcripts were put in the book), and these consist largely of astronomical baloney. George also used methods of automatic writing and what we now would call "channeling" in these contacts, alternating between one method and another. He also did Ouija sessions himself, rapidly moving around a large board from letter to letter. This explains how many of the messages could be so lengthy.

Meanwhile, Bailey reports that someone "high up" in the Santa Fe Railroad Company has told him that he knows of a case where a ham radio operator has received messages from space intelligences. This person also said that he could recommend a local ham, Lyman Streeter, to try to do the same for them. Whether Bailey had this talk with the unnamed person is your guess; whether this fellow worked for Santa Fe is also your guess. In any case, our boy George is sitting at home in Prescott fiddling with upturned water glasses, while Bailey is getting a radioman.

The last Ouija session prior to radio taking over (August 17) was more vintage Williamson: rather childish elements of ridiculously named space entities from Pluto and Uranus, salted with esoteric historical references and warnings about the H-bomb. They are told to boil water to help the reception, but this doesn't work. They turn on the radio, but that doesn't work either. At the very end of the session, the name of the radio operator arranged by Bailey plus the "send" and "receive" frequencies for Streeter's test run are transmitted (receive at 400 kilocycles, transmit at 40 meters). Hmm . . . I wonder who was pushing the glass then?



RADIO DAYS

So, the radio sessions begin—without Williamson. He's still in Prescott while Bailey and Streeter fire up in Winslow. Betty Bailey wasn't involved, either. You can read some of the transcripts of these radio sessions in the book. They contain a Williamsonian frame to them but certain other key things come through. The two men report that early in the

game they received GHW's main guy, "Zo," but right afterwards "Affa" took over as the big boy on the outer space block. GHW was mystified. He'd never heard of Affa.

George can't wait to get to Winslow, and when he does, Streeter begins receiving outer-space messages nearly every evening from late August to early September, and then more sparsely across the remainder of September, ending on October 5. In the first session Williamson attended, on August 23, the messages were sculpted largely in his mode, but with a bit more technical tilt to them, as well as one new message: "We want to land and you can be of help to us. Will you?" This was followed the next day with the message, "We want to be sure of everything before we land. Look for others to help our landing."

It is important to emphasize that Streeter was picking up *some* type of message, in a variant of Morse code no less. There were several witnesses to this beyond the Williamsons and Baileys. That these messages came from aliens I do not find believable, but someone was sending messages for Williamson and the others. That is the real mystery here.

At 9:30 p.m. on August 25, Streeter suddenly told everyone to look for a dark spot in the sky. After searching in the dark sky for a while, GHW was convinced that he and everyone else had seen a dark object near the horizon. "The dark spot in the sky was Affa," the radio said. Then, GHW said that they saw a blue light somewhere else, as requested, which was presumably his contact, Zo. As GHW noted, "Now we knew for sure that we were in contact with men from outer space!" (There is no doubt in my mind that it is GHW who writes the majority of the copy in *The Saucers Speak!* He is the master of the exclamation point.)

Near the end of August, Streeter told everyone that he had just done something tricky with the frequencies that no earthbound ham radio hoaxter could have coped with—switching from 40 meters to 160 meters in his transmissions with no warning. Yet the senders (the intelligences) handled the trick immediately. This proved, said Streeter, that this was no hoax. But what this actually proves, unless we believe in space intelligences sending messages to GHW and group, is that Streeter had to be in on the whole thing and that this little event was prearranged.

GHW, of course, was thrilled. During all this period, the Baileys and Williamsons were constantly discussing UFOs and esoterica with, doubtless, George dominating the airtime, as he usually did. He was a world-class spotlight seeker. Transmitting what GHW said in these many discussions to the framework of the received radio messages wouldn't have been very difficult, and, rather than being suspicious, our boy would have lapped it up as validation of his otherwise-attained inner knowledge.

In another telling incident, one evening an unexpected visitor of a skeptical nature showed up at Streeter's radio shack. No extraterrestrial messages were able to get through that evening. Hmm....

Much gobblety-gook spewed forth from late August through early September, and the Williamsons returned

only sporadically from then on. The next session was September 11, and it included this: "I hope we might have a landing soon. . . . If we can arrange a landing do not fear impostors. You can be sure it will be us." Later in the evening another contact: "We must make landing contact soon. . . . you may go your own way if you wish, but you know what we have told you. If you believe us, you will act accordingly." Other, almost threatening-sounding imprecations to be strong and "undertake what lies just ahead of you" fill this transcript.

Williamson had gotten the message, literally. He writes, "Since our space friends talked of landing so often, we decided to have a picnic in the mountains and perhaps they would land for us" (about September 28). The radio said "good idea" to this. Much weird commentary spewed over the radio on the 27th, and Williamson was wild with delight. However, the great event was not to be. For some reason, Streeter was the only one who knew exactly where "they" were supposed to land (for utterly unbelievable reasons—a sort of psychic paranoia). Also, a foolish driving error ruined their chances ("We had missed the chance of a lifetime!") So they went back to Streeter's home and ate their lunch. The radio then began sending sinister-sounding messages about the radio being dangerous, a man coming, and Streeter having a deep secret.

Williamson was confused by all of that, but shortly decided that the man coming was going to be an outer-space man. The deep secret may well have been that Streeter had previously been interested in UFOs and had attempted contact in 1950. One day shortly after that, he had gone into a type of trance and wouldn't or couldn't speak for eight days. He had amnesia about those eight days when he recovered; but strangely, after the contacts by radio started, Streeter suddenly remembered what had occurred. He had "left his earthly body" and gone elsewhere where he was told to rapidly "complete his task upon the Earth planet." Hmmm again.

Essentially nothing came in via radio after this visit and the missed landing on September 28.

ADAMSKI AND GHW

However, Williamson and the book left out several things that occurred. The most intriguing of these (to me) is how all this led them to Adamski. In the following quote, "IS" is GHW's shorthand for the space intelligences who've contacted him via channeling, Ouija, and radio.

"The IS did tell us that it was very important that we go over to meet Adamski. Little more than that, for it was by radiotelegraphy (all of that is *NOT* in *TSS!*), and 'Board.' IS said nothing about this authenticity—but did stress the fact we should see him, for it was part of a 'chain of events' that was necessary!!"

So, as we slip into October 1952, Williamson and Bailey have been challenged by the now-silent radio to go and seek out Adamski. And one of them already had.

Al and Betty Bailey, during the events reported above, decided to travel to California to see the Professor of Palomar Mountain. Here's Adamski's report of that encounter and a subsequent one with both couples:

It was late in August 1952 that Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Bailey of Winslow, Arizona, first came to Palomar Gardens and asked to talk with me privately. I had never heard of them prior to that time. During the conversation, they told me about Dr. and Mrs. George H. Williamson, of Prescott, Arizona. These four people were as interested in the flying saucers as I. They had read everything available on the subject. They, too, had seen these strange objects flash through the skies, sometimes low, sometimes high. And they, too, had made trips to a number of desert places in the hope of seeing one land. Then they heard about me and the Baileys drove up to see me and tell me some of their experiences.

Later, the Baileys and Williamsons came up together. After spending several days at Palomar Gardens as our guests, they asked me to telephone them before my next attempt to establish a contact. During their stay we had met a great deal and had become better acquainted and they wanted to be with me if things could be so arranged.

The Williamsons left Palomar Gardens feeling that they had lived up to their obligations received from the space people by radio. If Adamski came through, they would assist the space people in their first landing, as had been requested.

During the visit to Adamski, GHW impressed him with his knowledge and fervor, and Adamski impressed GHW with his "authority." He did this by channeling.

I only witnessed channeling by Adamski on a few occasions, but I can tell you that I was very impressed. He changed completely, even physically, as he spoke. You knew a very intelligent being was communicating.

The Adamski channeling session [several days] before the November 20 meeting was one of the most inspiring and beautiful I have ever heard! Nothing given during that session contradicts anything Adamski ever said. Whatever George A. was, he was most definitely NOT a liar!

As an aside, Adamski refers to GHW in *Flying Saucers Have Landed* (British Book Centre, 1953) as "Dr." Williamson, and an Air Force veteran with all sorts of experience about planes, but this is largely bunk. Williamson's Air Force career was real but ridiculously brief and confined largely to writing and news; his Ph.D.



George Adamski

didn't arrive until many years later from an outfit—Avon University—that was the academic sponsor of his Mayan Pyramid thesis in the early 1960s . . . not as bad as distance-learning doctorates, but not a lot better. What GHW was doing to give people the impression that he had a doctorate, I don't know. He signs his name on the Adamski affidavit with "Sc.D.," which, because he's the biggest bull-inflator imaginable, probably means that he considers himself as having a science degree—which he almost got at Arizona, but blew off the last requirements.

The Williamsons and Baileys went back to Arizona and waited. On November 18, Adamski called GHW. A contact of some kind would happen in the California desert. Could they meet him in Blythe, California, in two days? Williamson said yes. He contacted Bailey, who agreed, as well. The two couples headed toward Blythe, and Adamski, with Alice Wells and Lucy McGinnis, came from Palomar. They rendezvoused at the town of Blythe for breakfast.

Williamson had maps out trying to figure where they should go next. Adamski looked at the options and said he wanted to go outside, alone, and think about it. He came back in and announced that he was heading back toward Desert Center, which he had passed on his seven-hour drive from Palomar. The group got into their cars and drove west. At Desert Center they turned on to the Parker Highway and drove until Adamski stopped them. They milled around, Adamski reaching out for his intuitions. He and Bailey walked off for a while on their own. They returned and broke out the packed lunch. Food and picture taking ensued, and then GHW thought he saw a UFO. Bailey chimed in that he thought so, too. Then Lucy McGinnis agreed. Pictures of the UFO were somehow botched, but everyone was now thrilled and inspired.

Adamski suddenly asked to be driven down the road, but the rest were to stay. McGinnis drove, and Bailey, of all people, jumped in, too. Adamski saw what he wanted to and told the others to go back and fetch everyone else, while he took off on foot—to the meeting with Orthon. He told McGinnis to give him an hour before bringing the others back, and Adamski claimed that both McGinnis and Bailey saw a big UFO in the sky as they drove off.

The rest is history. Everybody attests to seeing footprints on the ground. Everybody allegedly attests (this is not nearly so clear) to seeing the departing light of Orthon's spaceship. (GHW goes to his death asserting this to be true.) Bailey and he suggest reporting this to the Phoenix newspaper on the way home, and Adamski says yes, do it. And thus the blockbuster story of the early days of UFOs is cemented into legend.

THE AFTERMATH AND SOME SPECULATION

Adamski, of course, goes on to tremendous fame—the undeniable contactee in the desert. Williamson is hyper-kinetically wild for all of this now, the ultimate adventure of humanity.

Streeter had his own sighting of a large, cigar-shaped object over Winslow, along with five other witnesses, on December 21, 1952. More ominously, Streeter had received a visit from a government agent of some kind (GHW was certain it must be the CIA), who said that the government had him dead to rights because he was in communication with unlicensed operators (see sidebar). The agent explained that the government was planning a vast educational program about flying saucers, and that Streeter could help himself by joining the “other fifteen ‘ham’ operators and cooperate with us.” Otherwise, he would suffer consequences.

Streeter then dies a premature death in the spring of 1955 (I suggest nothing conspiratorial about that!).

And Bailey? Well, he does write the book with Williamson that is published in 1954 (it was probably already written in 1953). And he is still hanging around the scene long enough to be interviewed by James Moseley, of

all people, in December 1953 (about the Adamski encounter, not the radio messages). But he doesn’t stay active, and his contacts with Williamson soon diminish, despite his alleged intense interest in the subject.

Williamson, late in life, finally takes a breath and scratches his head about this. What happened to Al, anyway? When they got back to Arizona, there was an exchange or two, and then: “the Baileys . . . not a word from them since 1953, not even a rumor—Alice [Wells] confirms this as well—she’s heard nothing.”

George then spins off into a typical Williamsonian interlude where he wonders why both the wives were named Betty, and he, Adamski, and Van Tassel were named George. “Coincidence? What does it mean, if anything?” It was a question that he might have better asked about Al Bailey’s involvement and disappearance, I’d suggest. Or about Streeter.

SOME LINGERING HAM RADIO MYSTERIES

by Mark Rodeghier

There are many peculiarities about the signals received by Lyman Streeter for George Hunt Williamson and Alfred Bailey, beyond the simple fact that signals were indeed received from someone, somewhere.

Ham radio operators, then and now, just can’t talk to any station you happen to hear on the air. Stations have to be licensed by their respective governments and they are required to identify themselves. If a station doesn’t identify itself with a standard prefix, communications should cease.

One could, of course, argue that the first extraterrestrial contacts by humanity should be exempt from this regulation. However, A.D. Middleton, who visited Streeter after the events described in the article, and who was a highly respected ham, took this restriction seriously. On April 9, 1955, he wrote to the Federal Communications Commission, Amateur Division, and requested guidance for situations where amateurs were “transmitting within our authorized bands but receiving on frequencies outside the bands . . . [in the context of transmissions from UFOs].” As explained below, this was exactly Streeter’s situation.

For what it’s worth, the reply from the FCC, on April 27, stated in part, “Within the limitations of Section 12.101 [the rules governing amateur radio service], amateurs may communicate with stations which transmit on frequencies outside the amateur frequency bands.” This is a typical bureaucratic response, as it doesn’t exactly answer Middleton’s question. It essentially states that you can do whatever isn’t forbidden by the regulations, which implies that the regulations still apply, even to extraterrestrial communications (you can read more about this in Williamson’s book *UFOs Confidential*, Essene Press, 1958, written with John McCoy).

Continuing on with the mystery of the signals, most of

the messages from Affa, et al., were received on 405 or 450 kilocycles. This is very odd. Standard ham radio equipment of that era would not receive transmissions in that range. It would have been possible for Streeter to modify his equipment to receive those frequencies, but there is no mention that he did by Williamson. Further, that frequency range was often used to transmit signals for radio aids to navigation, so transmitting in that band would be a definite no-no.

Furthermore, AM radios in those days used a superheterodyne receiver, which improved the performance of these devices. The receivers use an internal “intermediate frequency” of 455 kilocycles, and strong transmissions around 450 kilocycles would therefore have interfered with regular radio reception of those living near Streeter, if not other more distant locales.

So why would someone planning this elaborate hoax choose these particular frequencies for transmission? For one, essentially no hams would be listening on these frequencies, so the chance of others detecting your signals would be very small. Second, because of the superheterodyne issue, low power would be used, which would make it even less likely that others would detect the transmissions. With low power being used, the transmitting equipment would have to be nearby, in line-of-sight to Streeter’s antenna (which could still be many miles, depending on the antenna being used, or very nearby, to really play it safe).

There are other loose ends, because even though Streeter was transmitting on 40 or 80 meters, both of which are within the normal ham range, he certainly wasn’t using a normal call sign for the “station” he was contacting. If other hams overheard his transmissions, what would they have thought, or done? We just don’t know, but there is no evidence that anyone did.

Why have I laid out all this unprovable stuff about an early set of spectacular (and influential) claims? Because all my historical muddling about in the 1949–1954 era gives me the feeling that something stinks vis-à-vis contactees, Frank Scully and company, and the extremely effective damage they did to responsible study of the UFO phenomenon. Isn't it just a little too convenient that the Scully-Aztec crash story showed up as early as it did to fog over any investigation of crash claims? Isn't it just handy that Adamski, Truman Bethurum, Williamson, and Giant Rock rose up so spectacularly to wall off UFO study from serious people in academia and media? Isn't it a little intriguing that almost all of this "serious infection" festers out of the same origin point? (Case in point. One day following the Desert Center contact, GHW was back visiting Adamski. There was a party in the Hollywood area at the house of a businessman. While the businessman held an outsized piece of paper steady, GHW went hyperactive and drew Solex-Mal space language all over it, in a trance. The businessman was Gene Dorsey, friend of Adamski, Scully, Silas Newton, and who knows who else?)

And, if you were in the intelligence community and you had the job of shushing the saucers, what would you do? Would Scully and Newton be useful to you? Karl Pflock unearthed Silas Newton's old diary, where he says that agents told him to keep up the hoax. Would contactees meeting spiritually advanced beings in the desert, spouting a ridiculous astronomy and physics, be useful to you? The Giant Rock convention annually destroyed any credit that Keyhoe or the Lorenzens might have built up through the 1950s.

And how would you operate? How would you encourage naïve, enthusiastic, useful dupes, or persons a bit light in the ethics department, to promulgate incredible and even laughable images of who's behind the saucers? One glance at contactee Buck Nelson is, unfortunately, enough to send the academics home (see his pamphlet *My Trip to Mars, the Moon, and Venus*). Would you, in the intelligence community, care about what sort of messages were able to be freely transmitted (on *any* subject) by ham radio operators? Would you, for security reasons in this period, want to keep some control over these independent hams? Would you have not only your monitors, but also your agents, here and there, in the ham network? Might you have plans whereby you could actively apply their expertise?

Streeter and Bailey came into Williamson's life from nowhere. Bailey said some mysterious higher-up had told him that signals from space beings had already been received, and to go and employ Streeter for this purpose. Streeter later said that a government agent had told him that all this was being monitored and he must now stop. "Luckily," they had just gotten the message to seek out Adamski.

In January 1955, after *The Saucers Speak!* was published, a highly placed ham, A. D. [Alois David] Middelton (call letters W5CA, a leader for the region including New Mexico and Texas), located Streeter (despite his being

anonymous), and came from New Mexico to Winslow to meet him. He said that he had heard of other outer-space contacts, particularly one from Canada. Middelton wrote GHW then and said that he was convinced that the signals were okay. He also wrote Keyhoe and said that he was convinced that the GHW-Streeter signals were a hoax, but that he would be happy to offer the services of the ham network to Keyhoe for anything the major wished. Middelton then joined GHW's Telonic Research Institute to try to resurrect the phenomenon of signals from space, and in a year was making T. Townsend Brown a similar offer for the new NICAP. Middelton was a Sandia engineer. Maybe this means something, maybe not.

What all this stuff *really* amounts to, I don't know. My intuitions say that a bunch of this is just too pat not to have had some design. And I know my own devious mind. If I had the resources and the task of quieting the saucers, I'd have not only welcomed a Scully, but I would have been out there nurturing several other useful dupes (useful idiots, Lenin called them) in the expectation that, out of a dozen or two, I'd likely get a couple of spectacular successes. GHW was an intelligence agency's dream—an exciting, creative public dynamo with almost no ability to distinguish fantasy from reality if you could just salt a little concrete experience into his visionary world. I think that this is probably what happened. I think this because I don't believe that Affa and Zo were coming over Streeter's radio with their ridiculous-but-Williamson-attuned astronomy. So, I deduce that someone else was elaborately setting him up. And, as this led so smoothly to Adamski and the Big One, I further deduce that the setup was not by amateurs.

Still, maybe I'm wrong—I *have* been many times. Perhaps amateurs played games with GHW and a lot of the rest was just accident. Or, maybe Affa and Zo are better buddies with Orthon than I suspect. ♦

UFO OVER AUCKLAND

Mystery surrounds an apparent unidentified flying object seen in the skies above Auckland, New Zealand's Viaduct Basin. The *Auckland Sunday News* has obtained footage of the object, spotted flying at speed over the waterfront in broad daylight.

Both the Civil Aviation Authority and the Ministry of Defence have been unable to identify it. The photograph, taken in October 2005 by well-known photographer Richard Simpson, shows an object above the industrial tank farm in the mid-morning sun.

Sue Hansen of UFOCUS New Zealand and air traffic controller Graeme Opie both think it is not a bird. "I think it's definitely not an aeroplane and it doesn't look like it's been faked," she said. "It does have some characteristics of a disc shape." Hansen said the shadowing around the object was of greatest interest. "The only thing that may explain it is ionized air around the craft."—*Auckland Sunday News*, July 16.

WHERE ARE THE CLOSE ENCOUNTERS?

BY MARK RODEGHIER

Those of us who follow the ebb and flow of raw UFO reports, whether to MUFON or CUFOS, or to well-known websites, including the National UFO Reporting Center, have come to recognize the drop in close encounter cases. Whether it is physical trace events or a good old fashioned CE3 with the sighting of a humanoid, these cases seem much less frequent nowadays.

The latest report from Chris Rutkowski's Canadian UFO Survey (survey.canadianuforeport.com) confirms this trend. Figure 1 shows the number of reports received each year across Canada. For whatever reason, reports in general have greatly increased in this decade, although the total dropped a bit in 2005. There are far more UFOs reported now than in the 1990s in Canada. The same is generally true for the United States, although perhaps with not as great an increase since 2000.

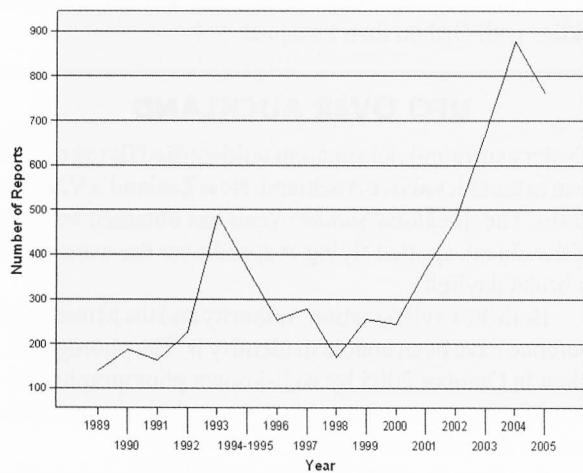


Figure 1. Number of reports.

What about close encounters? Have they followed the same trend? Figure 2 provides the answer.

The number of reports is much smaller—only about 4%

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of reports are close encounters over the 17-year period in Canada—so there are larger relative swings from year to year. But close encounters generally do increase, beginning in the current decade, although not to the higher levels of the 1990s.

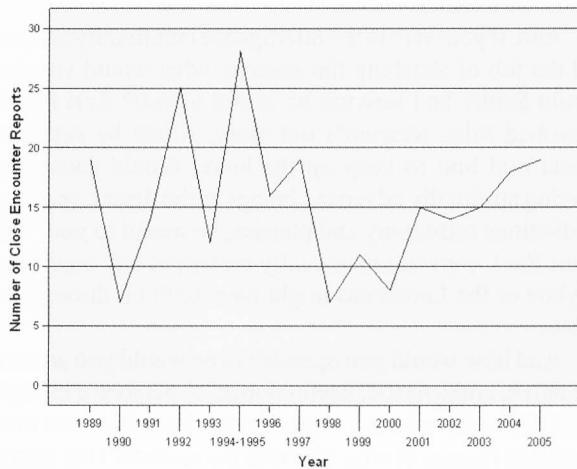


Figure 2. Number of close encounter reports.

But is this the whole story? I'd suggest not. I and colleagues have noticed that close encounters are not as common, compared to other cases. To investigate this, we need to look at the percentage of all sightings that are close encounters.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of all reports that are close encounters, by year. It is immediately evident that our sense of the data has been correct. There has been a fairly steady drop in the percentage of close encounters since the first year of the Canadian survey in 1989. Close encounters now comprise only about 2 percent of all reports.

What does it all mean? Are UFOs reluctant to come near to witnesses? Do they no longer land? Since witnesses generally can't seek out a UFO close encounter, it would seem that influences beyond witness behavior would be underlying this trend. Still, if witnesses were now more likely to report distant events of lights in the sky, but less likely to report close encounters, we would see the same pattern. But I can't easily imagine why that disparity would be true.

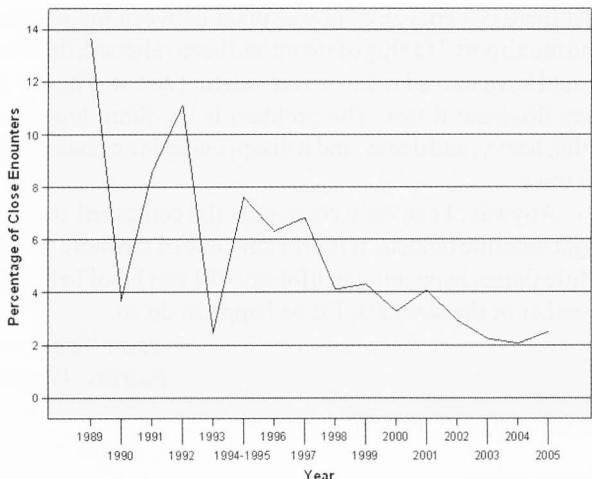


Figure 3. Percentage of close encounters.

This pattern is further evidence that the characteristics of the UFO phenomenon are not fixed and immutable. The appearance and behavior of the phenomenon has changed quite a bit over time (e.g., from disks to triangles), and this change is one of the latest examples. It would certainly be interesting to see data for other countries to see if this trend holds more broadly. ♦

UFO RESEARCH QUEENSLAND

UFO Research Queensland is a voluntary, nonprofit association established in 1956 to receive, research, and record sightings. It is located in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, and is holding its 50th anniversary conference on September 30–October 1. Check out their website at www.uforq.asn.au.

LETTERS

CLOUDS AND SATELLITE OBJECTS

To the editor:

I read Herbert Taylor's recent article ("Cloud Cigars: A Further Look," *IUR* 30:3), and then went back and reread his two earlier *IUR* articles ("Satellite Objects and Cloud Cigars," 29:1, and "Mystery Clouds and the UFO Connection," 29:4). First, let me say that my efforts in ufology have been through the lens of animal reactions (or not) during UFO events. Because animal reactions are associated with UFO events that are estimated to be within 200 feet of witnesses, and almost never more than 500 feet away, I don't have a lot of experience evaluating distant UFO events, which most of his sightings are. On the other hand, because I do Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*) migration studies with my husband (involving hours of sky watching, i.e., cloud watching, storm watching, aircraft watching, and a few seconds of nighthawk watching), I have some feeling for clouds and how they look and what they do. That's my background, just so you can see where I'm coming from.

First, a few words about the second article on mystery clouds/UFOs. This aspect of his studies strikes me as weak. I have seen natural cloud events that bear great similarity to almost all of the daytime cloud events. Also, my experience indicates when many witnesses see something they decide is strange, they will link anything else they observe to the strangeness in a very uncritical way.

Having watched clouds form from nothing and dissipate to nothing; shadows within clouds giving very strange effects only understood with high-power binoculars put on the situation; balloons in clouds (once hundreds of small black balloons moving into clouds—no question, could see strings with binoculars); aircraft leaving and departing two nearby airports, then flying in and out of clouds with

interesting lighting conditions, I think it would be very hard to critically investigate or draw conclusions about these cloud/UFO associations. I'm not saying there could not be valid cloud/UFO connections in there somewhere, but I don't see how you would get at it among all the noise. Not much hard information in these events. So I would have very high criteria for including any of these.

Turning attention to cloud cigars and satellite objects—this is much more interesting in that you are actually getting some consistency in behavior and appearance between sightings (rare event in my opinion and to be valued). The vertical/horizontal orientations and repositioning, the clouds formed at ends, the small objects being released, similarity in their fall from the larger object, and then small objects moving out to "survey" the area (loosely speaking), and the long durations are all interesting clues. The multiple witnesses add strength, and I found the September 1954 sighting in France interesting in its complexity.

I think some weeks ago I saw a reference in an email to tornadoes as an explanation, which doesn't fit as tornadoes are associated with dynamic, fast-moving weather events. Years ago, I once saw little funnel clouds attempting to descend from a front roaring into D.C., and they were constantly changing as the front ripped through and no one would ever think "carrot" or "cigar." They would think funnel cloud trying to descend.

So I have little to suggest in terms of explanations. I would encourage Taylor to continue his cloud cigar/satellite object study. I think this kind of focused study is very worthwhile. I think hard-nosed investigation of current sighting events is an important area for ufology, but I seem to be somewhat isolated in that opinion—hence my recent loss of enthusiasm.

I know after my animal reaction study was published, I

had this naive hope that I would get some current sightings and direct contact with witnesses or perhaps questions or feedback from investigators. Some serious, current investigation was the next logical step needed to move ahead. Other than one interesting sighting referred by Peter Davenport [from his National UFO Reporting Center], it has not happened. I suspect Taylor shares some of the same frustrations.

Finally, as though this email is not long enough, after all the critical things I said about the cloud/UFO relationship, I will tell you about something that happened to me. I recorded it in my field notebook when it happened, but to this day I don't know what to make out of it.

August 9, 1999, at 2:20 p.m., was a spectacular day in Washington, D.C. I was on the Beltway on a wildlife rescue run approaching the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, just south of Reagan National Airport. Looking toward the Potomac River, I noticed in a clear blue, cloudless sky one single white cloud, about 40 degrees above the ESE horizon. The cloud seemed odd to me. It looked like a dense cigar with a slight hump appearance on top. A passenger jet was turning, banking, to land at the airport, and I remember thinking, I'd like to be on that aircraft and take a look at that cloud. The apparent length of the cloud and very low-flying aircraft were the same, but the cloud appeared to have twice the mass of the aircraft and was located beyond it.

All of this happened over several seconds. At that point, I had to glance back to switch to the exit lane of the Beltway for Route 1, and when I looked back a split second later the cloud was gone. I kept looking for it on the exit ramp, and after I was on Route 1—nothing, not a cloud in the sky and absolutely nothing that obstructed my view of the sky.

The weather was a great fall-type day that we get now and then in August. From the nearby airport readings I got these weather conditions: 82°F, 31% relative humidity, dew point 54 degrees, wind NNE 9–11 mph, ceiling unlimited and reportedly scattered clouds at 35,000 feet, though the cloud described was the only one in my view of the sky.

If I were to present a mundane explanation, it would be

ALIEN “ABDUCTION,” RESCUE, PROPOSAL A FIRST FOR MUSEUM

To match his love, Ross Savedra's proposal had to be out of this world. After one of the silver-suited alien extras in the Roswell UFO Museum's alien autopsy exhibit “abducted” 23-year-old Ariane Ash, Savedra, 32, made his way through the crowd, fought two figures in silver suits and rubber masks, and wrestled his girlfriend to safety.

Savedra pulled Ash to the center of the crowded room, fumbled quickly in his left pocket, and dropped to his knees. His voice choked with emotion, he told Ash she was his passion and asked if she would be his wife. The two embraced in a cloud of shiny, colored confetti thrown by onlookers. Tourists who had been tipped off, family members, and the rubber-masked, bulbous, purple-eyed aliens—Ash's brother-in-law and stepfather—all applauded. “By

that there is a coal-fired power plant between my position and the airport. If a slug of steam had been released, the wind would have moved it downriver, where I saw it. The dry air may dissipate it fast. The problem is the thing looked so solid, heavy, and dense, and it disappeared in an instant with no trace.

Anyway, I can only encourage the continued study of cigar/satellite objects. It is probably one of the more worthwhile things happening in ufology. If I can be of help with weather or the sky data, I'd be happy to do so.

Joan Woodward
Fairfax, Virginia

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

To the editor:

In “We Know Where You Live” (*IUR* 30:2), Michael Swords poses the question, “Why did I look just then?” I've asked myself the same question many times in regard to my July 6, 1947, sighting at our ranch near Encampment, Wyoming. See Richard Hall, ed., *The UFO Evidence* (NICAP, 1964), p. 55.

On that sunny afternoon, my brother and I and a family friend were discussing the wave of “flying saucer” sightings, headline news at the time—were they real or was it mass hysteria?—when my brother pointed to a hawk circling over the meadow. “Look, there's one now,” he joked. I saw the hawk, but for some reason I then looked straight up and saw a silver-gray oval, very much like those illustrated on page 12 of that issue of *IUR*. I excitedly pointed it out to the other two, and they quickly spotted it, and we watched, awestruck, as it dwindled to a mere speck, then vanished in the distance. It was on a northerly heading and did not appear to change course, speed or altitude during the 2 to 3 minutes it was visible.

Why did I look just then? I don't know. But if I had not looked up at that precise moment, I never would have seen it.

David Kenney
Palos Verdes Estates, California

the way, everyone, she said yes,” noted Julie Shuster, the museum's director, on the sound system.

Savedra, born and raised in Roswell, picked the UFO Museum as the place where he would ask for Ash's hand because of its “uniqueness,” he said. Although the museum hosted a wedding three years ago, Savedra made history with his proposal.

“Being from Roswell, he thought, what a perfect place,” Shuster said earlier. Perfect—and original.

“He's the first person in the world who gets to propose here,” Shuster said.

“She's always calling me her alien man,” Savedra said of his fiancée, as they exchanged nervous glances and caresses.—*Roswell (N. Mex.) Daily Record, July 17.*



METEORIC DUSTY PLASMAS

Meteoric dusty plasmas certainly exist, but whether they can be charged or otherwise visually incandesce beyond their initial entry into the atmosphere is debatable. Certainly dusty plasmas can interfere with radio and are made more turbulent by bombardment with high-frequency emissions (HF). What is not explained is how these could cause someone to undergo a “close encounter.” After all, most plasma phenomena described occur in the upper portions of the Earth’s atmosphere. What about plasmas and UAP effects in the lower atmosphere?

UAP-METEOR CORRELATION

The Condign report claims to have established a correlation between meteor-shower peak dates and UAP activity (see Figure 3, but note the dates for peak meteor-shower activity in the associated table are incorrect). This supposition is a strong point in one of Mr. X’s arguments, a correlation between possible meteoric dust-generated plasmas accounting for UAP reports. It is not disputed that meteors produce plasma when they enter the atmosphere, and their microscopic debris contributes to atmospheric dusty plasmas.

However, since the MoD has not been careful in collecting the eyewitness information, there is no way to filter out possible direct observation of meteoric phenomena as probable misperceptions. In fact, there is a more logical assertion that can be made. Any such correlation may be due to direct misperception. (Note previous comments concerning the information recorded on the standard report form and the fact that Mr. X was unable to recheck facts.)

Mr. X places too much trust in the public being able to report meteoric phenomena accurately. Suffice it to say that although many people can recognize meteoric phenomena

there is still a significant proportion who can’t, and it is these who occasionally file UFO reports.

We can state this quite confidently, drawing comparisons with data from the BUFORA Astronomical Reference Point (ARP). The ARP continually received UFO reports from all over the UK in the period covered by Condign. The data demonstrates the fluctuating fraction of yearly UFO reports that were actually produced by direct observations of meteors, satisfactorily determined by rechecking information with witnesses.

Guess what? These too show a similar correlation to meteor-shower peak dates.

DUSTY PLASMAS

Much new scientific research is being conducted into the subject of dusty plasmas. For example, in relation to atmospheric plasmas, the European Incoherent Scatter (EISCAT) Scientific Association in northern Scandinavia bombards the atmosphere in the polar regions with HF and then studies the resultant plasma turbulence. The European Cluster II spacecraft was also tasked to investigate plasma phenomena and the Earth’s magnetosphere. The more we observe Earth with spaceborne remote-sensing and optical equipment covering the full range of the radiation spectrum, the more unusual, rare, and as yet undiscovered visual atmospheric phenomena yield to detection and study. One example is the observation of three types of transient optical phenomena at high altitudes above thunderstorms. These are now fully integrated into the scientific nomenclature as sprites, elves, and blue jets (see Working Paper 24 in Volume 2 of the Condign report).

UAPs ON RADAR

Working Paper 5 in Volume 2 and Chapter 1 in Volume 3 deal with the technical capabilities of UK air defense radar

within the context of UAPs. A number of specific incidents are alluded to with insufficient information to allow detailed scrutiny. Mr. X implies there have been very few trackings of UAPs/UFOs on UK air defense radar within the period covered by the study (1987–1997). He cites one occasion when “a triangular (visual) formation was tracked on radar with an acceleration from 100 to 980kts in two seconds and an altitude change from 7000 to 3000ft in 1 second.” Unfortunately, this appears to refer to an incident during the Belgian wave of 1990, so it falls outside the UK coverage of the study he himself set out in his Terms of Reference.

A key finding from Mr. X’s sur-

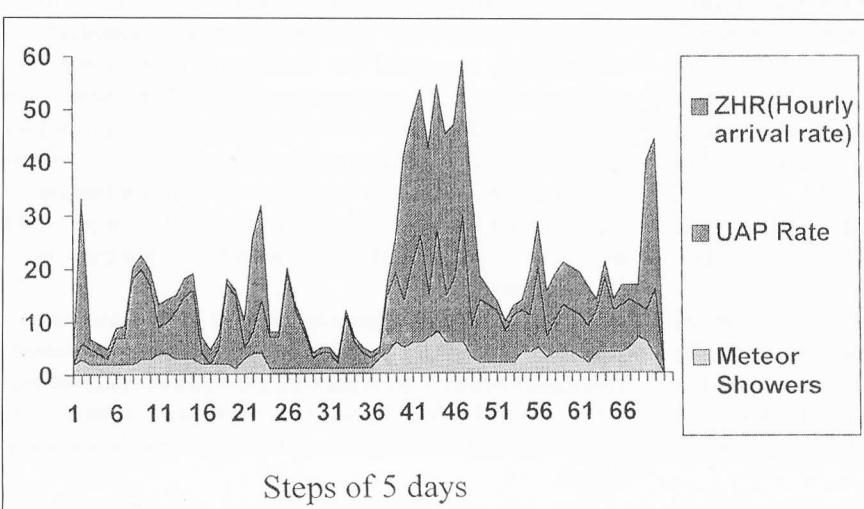


Fig. 3. Correlation of number of meteor-shower types and meteor entry rate with UAP reports, 1996.

vey of DI55's report archive is that "there is a significant absence of radar plots/tracks on UAPs" in the UKADGE when contrasted with the numerous visual reports made to MoD. He considers a number of possible explanations, three of which have been deleted for reasons of security, and concludes: "Clearly, some UAP response to radar is variable, otherwise all radars would see all the objects which entered their respective coverage zones all the time." The implication is that the radar waveform of a UAP target is not consistent with a solid craft but may be consistent with atmospheric phenomena, such as a dusty plasma. This leads him to speculate that variability in radar detection "may be due to aspect or orientation, material composition or both." Hence, "if UAPs are plasmas, their intensity would probably be diminishing as their physical life decays," which might explain the variability in radar detections both by air defense and civil air traffic radars.

As we expected, the sections dealing with radar have had large sections deleted under exemption Section 26 of the FOIA. According to the author, these sections "contain performance values of the UKADR radars [and] radar performance is directly relevant to whether UAPs can enter and leave UK airspace and whether they constitute a threat." As a result, the MoD decided the release of this information "could be of significant value to the planning of an attack on the UK, including from terrorism." These exemptions are currently the subject of appeal.

HAZARDS TO AIRCRAFT

Although the Condign report concludes there is no evidence that solid craft exist which are unidentified and could pose a collision hazard, Chapter 2 of Volume 3 examines seven unexplained fatal accidents involving RAF aircraft. It also scrutinizes seven unexplained air-miss incidents reported by civilian crews "where the identity of one of the conflicting objects is never explained." Just one of these incidents involved a simultaneous radar trace of a unidentified target. All seven air-miss events were reported between 1988 and 1996 and were investigated by the Joint CAA and MoD Airprox Section (JAS). The study states that, while there is no evidence for any fatal accident resulting from a collision with a UAP in the UK, fatalities have occurred in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere.

UAPs are deemed to pose little or no danger to aircraft (a risk assessed as being lower than bird strikes), unless violent maneuvers are undertaken to either intercept or avoid them. It adds that "despite . . . hundreds of reports of low altitude UAP activity, there is no firm evidence in the available reports that a RAF crew has ever encountered or evaded a low altitude UAP event" or that any RAF aircraft has been involved in an interception involving this type of phenomenon.

Nevertheless, Mr. X makes a number of "subsidiary recommendations" resulting from the findings of this section of the report. He feels the air-miss database for higher

altitude reports (up to 20,000 feet) is lacking data because of reluctance on the part of airline crews to make formal UAP reports. Here again the "bad press" which UFOs receive in the media and via the activities of ufologists is blamed, as Mr. X observes: "There is evidence that [crews] are seeing far more than they are reporting for fear of ridicule or the potential effect on company business."

He recommends that military and civilian crews should be advised that "no attempt should be made to outmaneuver a UAP during interception" and civilian crews "should be advised not to manoeuvre, other than to place the object astern, if possible."

We made a follow-up request in May 2006 for evidence of action taken as a direct result of these recommendations. The MoD confirmed the findings had been sent to the Directorate of Air Operations (DAO) who would have been responsible for further dissemination to the Civil Aviation Authority and RAF. However, it said "no further correspondence regarding the 'subsidiary recommendations' have been found on the accessible files for the period in question."

UAP WORK IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Volume 3 of the report refers to research and studies carried out in a number of foreign nations into UAPs, atmospheric plasmas, and their potential military applications. This short chapter includes sections on the former Soviet Union, China, Spain, the United States, and Canada. Despite claims of an international UFO coverup, the author notes "there is no intelligence exchange or collaboration of any sort on the topic of 'UFOs'" between the UK and foreign governments.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, we have found the Condign report is replete with errors and reads like an intelligence report rather than a scientific memorandum. Knee-jerk dismissals of the documents as a "whitewash" and mishandling by the media have only slightly hampered our attempts to reveal the actual meaning and context of these documents. The research we have presented so far on our website and elsewhere refute all ignorant and idle guesses, and leave no doubt in our minds that Condign—whatever its flaws—is an important document in the history of ufology. This should be apparent to anyone who spends sufficient time delving into these matters for themselves.

If the report is a whitewash and the MoD really knows "the truth" about UFOs, this poses an interesting question. If evidence of an ET presence on Earth had been established, why would the MoD need to commission a three-year study—carried out in secret—to tell them what they already knew?

As this article has demonstrated, the internal documents show the study was commissioned after a long battle against internal prejudice in the MoD over three decades,

many years before Britain had a Freedom of Information Act on its statute books. Unless all these internal documents are fakes or deliberate plants, claims by conspiracy theorists that the report was produced specifically for public consumption can be confidently dismissed as nonsense.

The contents of the report suggest the MoD actually knows very little about UFOs and even that some civilian ufologists know far more. Its main recommendation (implemented in December 2000) is that “it should no longer be a requirement for DI55 to monitor UAP reports as they do not demonstrably provide information useful to Defence Intelligence.”

This coalesces into its main raison d'être, to remove the sensitive Defence Intelligence section of the MoD from the unwelcome publicity it had received as a result of its involvement in the UFO business. This hidden agenda may well explain the restricted distribution of the report and why the public “UFO desk,” Sec(AS), were kept out of the “need to know” loop.

Unlike Edward Condon, who had a team, Condign was the product of one man (Mr. X), working with inadequate data and a tight budget. He was not authorized to interview witnesses or speak to scientists. Under these circumstances, it seems he did the best he could, and although his report is unscientific there are some resourceful aspects to the outcome. The study also works well as an example of how not to scientifically study UFOs. The limited remit of Mr. X's aim is underlined by the TORS (Terms of Reference) in Annex A of Volume 1—“to determine the potential value, if any, of UAP sighting reports to defence intelligence.”

Despite its many and varied flaws and false suppositions, we have to accept that the Condign report is likely to be the most detailed attempt by the Ministry of Defence to assess this multifaceted phenomenon for many years to come.

Again, this raises another question. If DI55 are no longer interested in UAPs or UFOs, why do they still maintain an open file on the subject, as we have established using the FOI? The clue that could explain this continuing interest is found in the Executive Summary: “The conditions for the initial formation and sustaining of . . . buoyant charged masses . . . are not completely understood. . . . nevertheless, the underlying physics may have some military application in the future in the form of active visual, radar and IR decoys and passive electromagnetic spectrum energy absorbers.” The recommendation is that “further investigation should be [made] into the applicability of various characteristics of plasmas in novel military applications.”

Many other unanswered questions remain. There are background details to uncover, more documents to request, and the identity of the author to pursue. These avenues could all provide missing information to complete the jigsaw.

Despite claiming from the outset that he was working from raw data and had made a conscious effort to avoid

influence from the media or the UFO industry, ultimately Mr. X was unable to escape the pervasive influence of ufology on popular culture. On our first reading of his report, we were quite surprised to find his conclusions *do indeed show* such influences drawn from his literature search, particularly the works of Paul Devereux and Jenny Randles.⁴ These influences make Mr. X's quote at the beginning of Volume 1 (“prejudice will take you further from the truth than ignorance”) sound rather ironic!

On this note we shall conclude with a final message both directed to ufologists and the author of Condign: “Prejudice will take you further from the truth than ignorance.”

RESOURCES

The latest news on UK FOIA releases along with extensive commentary on the Condign report can be found at our website, www.uk-ufo.org/condign/.

All four volumes of the report can be downloaded in pdf format from the UK Ministry of Defence FOIA website at www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/FreedomOfInformation/PublicationScheme/SearchPublicationScheme/UnidentifiedAerialPhenomenaupInTheUkAirDefenceRegion.htm.

David Clarke and Andy Roberts, *Out of the Shadows: UFOs, the Establishment, and the Official Cover-up* (London: Piatkus, 2002), is a detailed analysis of the MoD's interest in UFOs from World War II to the present.

Recent papers and research on atmospheric plasmas include:

EISCAT, www.eiscat.com/about.html.

Cluster spacecraft, clusterlaunch.esa.int/science-e/www/area/index.cfm?fareaid=8.

New Microscopic Properties of Magnetic Reconnection Derived by Cluster, May 19, 2006, clusterlaunch.esa.int/science-e/www/object/index.cfm?fobjectid=39246.

Research Activities of the Dusty Plasma Group, debye.colorado.edu/research.html.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The team of researchers who uncovered the Condign report and associated documents included David Clarke, Gary Anthony, Joe McGonagle, and Andy Roberts.

2. *Magonia* 92 (June 2006): 2, 11.

3. Facsimiles of the Flying Saucer Working Party and Rendlesham files can be found at the two websites listed in Resources.

4. Photocopied maps and graphics from two identifiable books appear in Volume 2 of the report. They are (a) Paul Devereux, with David Clarke, Andy Roberts, and Paul McCartney, *Earthlights Revelation* (London: Blandford, 1989), in Working Paper 18; and (b) Jenny Randles, *UFOs and How to See Them* (London: Anaya, 1992), in Working Paper 3.

APPENDIX A: UAPs

The acronym UAP is used both in the title and throughout the main body of the study commissioned by MoD. The Defence Intelligence Staff has long regarded the acronym UFO as discredited, because of the connotation that objects or craft of extraterrestrial origin have been observed. This idea is endemic both in the media and popular culture. It becomes apparent that UFOs and ufologists have such a negative press that it was impossible for any branch or individual within the MoD to commission studies of the material they hold. Attempts to do so were stymied because of the perception that any work on UFOs would be seen as “a waste of public money” particularly during the 1980s when the defense budget was pruned to the bone. The creation of an alternative, more definitive, term—UAP (unidentified aerial phenomena)—to describe the residue of inexplicable incidents was the solution. By the early 1990s, UAP was frequently used by the British defense intelligence staff while their civilian colleagues in Sec(AS) continued to use UFO.

However, UAP (pronounced “whap”) was not new, because the phrase “aerial phenomena” has been in use by the RAF since at least 1952. While UAP appears in DIS documents as early as 1962, shortly afterwards ufologists began to adopt an alternative version of the term. UAP, with the meaning “unidentified atmospheric phenomenon,” was coined by UFO investigator/writer Jenny Randles in her discussions with J. Allen Hynek during the late 1970s. Jenny recalls that “we talked about his classification scheme and how I felt it needed to be updated. I argued that UAP was a better term to use in order to interest scientists because it presumed less and was more accurately descriptive than UFO, which, both by its use of the word object and by years of presumed application now inferred a material craft, usually a spacecraft, in many people’s minds.”

APPENDIX B: UK SECURITY CLASSIFICATIONS

The MoD has stated publicly on many occasions over the past 40 years that the topic of UFOs was not classified. The material released both at the National Archives and under the FOIA suggests, however, that on occasions when UFO reports impinged upon other areas that were covered by security—for example, the capabilities of defense radars—they could become subject to the Official Secrets Act (OSA). For example, an Air Ministry document from 1960 states clearly: “The Press are never to be given information about unusual radar sightings. . . . unauthorised disclosures of this type will be viewed as offences under the Official Secrets Act.”

In the UK there are two levels of security classification for official documents: secret and top secret. The UAP Study of 2000 was classified at the lower level of “Secret/UK Eyes Only.” However, in 1998 the MoD released a

group of UFO documents classified at the higher level of top secret at the National Archives. These are the minutes of the DSI/JTIC committee, 1950–1951, which established the Flying Saucer Working Party at the height of the Cold War. The FSWP report itself was classified “Secret/Discreet” and both sets of documents dismissed all reports received to date (1951) as optical illusions, misperceptions of man-made and natural phenomena, and hoaxes.

In the House of Lords, on January 25, 2001, the late Lord Hill-Norton asked MoD “what is the highest classification that has been applied to any MoD document concerning UFOs.” The reply was, “A limited search through available files has identified a number of documents graded Secret. The overall classification of the documents was not dictated by details of specific sightings of ‘UFOs.’” Hill-Norton followed up his question with another on May 3, asking “why the UFO documents referred to were classified secret; whether these documents had any caveats attached to them; and what was the reason for any such caveats.” The answer was, “One document was classified ‘Secret’ with a ‘UK Eyes Only’ caveat because it contained information about the UK air defence ground environment that could be of significant value to hostile or potentially hostile states. Associated correspondence was given the same classification. Generally, however, notifications of and correspondence on the subject of ‘UFO’ sightings are unclassified.” ♦

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