

UFOs in the 1980s

The story, of course, was a hoax, more specifically a practical joke, as were tales of "airship" crashes related in 1897 papers during what some would regard as the first great modern UFO wave. The most famous of these tales had it, as the *Dallas Morning Post* claimed on its front page two days later, that on April 17 a spaceship collided with Judge Proctor's windmill in Aurora, Texas, and left in the wreckage the body of a Martian. The *Post* reported on the same page the same day that a Farmersville "eye witness" had seen a passing airship in which three men were singing "Nearer My God to Thee" and distributing temperance tracts. If the *Post's* intention was to poke fun at public credulity, it failed. In 1973 a UFO enthusiast showed up in Aurora, newspaper reporters in tow, to demand that the community exhume the grave in which the enthusiast claimed the Martian lay. Among other fictions in the *Post* story, Judge Proctor had no windmill.

Crash claims had a dubious pedigree from the beginning and were central to the second great hoax of the UFO age. (The first was a complex episode known as the Maury Island affair, perpetrated in the wake of Kenneth Arnold's and other sightings in the summer of 1947.) In 1950 *Variety* columnist Frank Scully produced the best-selling *Behind the Flying Saucers*, passing on, apparently innocently, what proved to be fraudulent claims about crashes of Venusian spacecraft in New Mexico and Arizona. In a devastating expose published in 1952, *True* magazine showed that Scully's principal informants were veteran con artists.

The *True* article discredited not only the Scully stories but all stories of crashed discs, and the major ufological organizations of the 1950s, such as Civilian Saucer Intelligence (New York), the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO), and the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), would have nothing to do with them, even though most ufologists of the period thought the government was probably being much less than forthcoming about its knowledge of extraterrestrial visitation. In the late 1950s and into the 1960s NICAP, under director Donald E. Keyhoe (author of

widely-read books such as *The Flying Saucer Conspiracy* [1955] and *Flying Saucers: Top Secret* [1960]), lobbied vigorously for Congressional hearings to end the "cover-up," but the cover-up was thought to be of gun-camera films of discs and of other impressive instrumented evidence. Crash claims were never mentioned and when NICAP received them, it filed them away and forgot about them.

Rumors of Crashes: Even as they were being ignored, the stories continued. In their usual form they went like this:

In the late 1940s and maybe even later, several flying saucers crashed in the Southwest. The remains, including the bodies of gray-skinned humanoid beings, were retrieved by government and military agencies. The material was taken for study to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, and subsequently some of it was sent elsewhere. The entire matter is highly classified and only a small number of individuals within the government know the whole story. The secrecy has been maintained both to prevent panic and to keep the Russians from knowing that we have access to extraterrestrial technology. At the appropriate time the government will release the information.

Most of the stories containing these allegations came from second-, third- and fourth-hand sources and were easy to dismiss as folklore. In some cases, however, the sources were individuals who claimed to have this information from their own knowledge or from the testimony of their own sources. For example, one informant was a woman who worked at Wright-Patterson for a number of years. Possessing a high security clearance, she was given access to much classified material. In due course she retired and subsequently learned that she was dying of cancer. Before her death she confided to a ufologist (remarking, "Uncle Sam can't do anything to me once I'm in my grave") that her work had included the cataloging of all incoming UFO material. She processed about 1000 items, she claimed, seeing to it that they were photographed and tagged. Some of the items were from the interior of a

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crashed UFO which had been brought to the base. She also saw two bodies carried on a cart from one room to the next. The bodies, preserved in chemicals, were of generally human appearance, although they were only four or five feet tall and had larger-than-normal heads and slanted eyes.

Other persons making such claims seemed sincere, but their stories about glimpsing something at Wright-Patterson or being present at crash-retrievals were unverifiable. Apparent sincerity was hardly enough to make believable so fantastic a claim. Ufologists took to referring to these, and not favorably, as the "little-men-in-a-pickle-jar" story and their persistence was noted even by folklorists, who began reporting them in papers and books about "urban legends."

At one point in the mid-1960s Sen. Barry Goldwater, a brigadier-general in the Air Force reserve, tried to check out the rumor that at Wright-Patterson there was a secret "Blue Room" where UFO remains were kept. When he asked his friend Gen. Curtis LeMay about the story, LeMay gave him "holy hell," Goldwater would tell the *New Yorker* (April 25, 1988), informed him that he did not have the necessary clearance, and warned him never to bring up the subject again.

The first prominent UFO investigator to urge ufologists to reconsider their long dismissal of crash claims was Leonard H. Stringfield. A respected figure in the field since the 1950s, he had edited an excellent newsletter, *C.R.I.F.O. Orbit*, between 1954 and 1957. In September 1955 the Air Defense Command (ADC) approached him and asked if he would screen the UFO reports he received and send on the best ones. He was also told that the Ground Observer Corps in the Cincinnati area, where he lived, had been instructed to forward reports to him for his evaluation. The ADC gave Stringfield a telephone code number which would connect him with the command filter center. Stringfield was also told that he was not to "ask any questions." His experiences with the ADC convinced him that a high-level UFO cover-up existed.

With the passing of time Stringfield began to suspect that maybe what was being covered up involved matters even more dramatic than the radar/visual cases he had learned of as an ADC associate but that the Air Force denied to the press. He found himself rethinking the crashed-disc story, recalling accounts told by persons who it was hard to believe were liars, such as, in one case, a Presbyterian minister. In his 1977 book *Situation Red, The UFO Siege!* he devoted 10 pages to the subject.

Before long Stringfield was inundated with crashed-saucer tales, and they quickly became the major focus of his interest. In 1978 he related some of them to the annual conference (held that year, ironically, in Dayton, home of the notorious Wright-Patterson) of the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON). None of the stories had any independent confirmation, and Stringfield concealed the identities of nearly all of his informants, to the frustration of those who wanted to investigate further. He played a tape in which one man related his alleged experience as a guard at a UFO crash site. Later, when the man's name became known, other investigators determined that the story was fictitious. Over the next few years, as he presented periodic updates of the crash stories and reports that had come his way, Stringfield would be criticized by a number of ufologists, who complained that the evidence being presented was feeble for so extraordinary a claim. Some (most prominently historian David M. Jacobs) argued that such a thing as a crashed saucer was impossible on *a priori* grounds. Such a secret could not be kept (to which proponents rejoined that the secret had *not* been kept; it just had not been believed). The most ingenious argument came from longtime ufologist George W. Earley, who wrote in *Fate* that heavy, bulky objects such as flying discs could not have been transported from the Southwest to Ohio on the relatively primitive, pre-interstate highway system of late '40s/early '50s America.

The *a priori* arguments aside, from the critics' point of view the basic problems with the crash/retrieval claim were two: first, there were a significant percentage of anonymous informants

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and second, there were simply too many crash stories, none of the same event, thus no mutual confirmation. All that would be changed with the Roswell incident, which has emerged as the single most significant crashed saucer account.

In January 1978 William L. Moore, a schoolteacher and aspiring writer from Herman, Minnesota, and Stanton T. Friedman, a physicist and UFO lecturer, met to discuss rumors they had been hearing about an obscure incident from three decades ago, something that existed as little more than a footnote in the early history of the UFO phenomenon. As the story went, in early July 1947 a weather balloon had dropped on the property of a rancher near Corona, New Mexico, and through a comedy of errors a story had gone out through the Army Air Base at nearby Roswell that the remains of a flying disc had been recovered. Soon a correction went out and there the matter ended, no more than a silly misunderstanding.

But was it? In the mid-1970s a California forest ranger had told the late Bobbi Ann Girona, a writer interested in UFOs, that his mother had had an interesting UFO experience in New Mexico. When Girona and Friedman interviewed her, the woman, Lydia Sleppy, told a strange story.

She said that at four o'clock in the afternoon of July 7, 1947, as she was operating the teletype at radio station KOAT in Albuquerque, she got a phone call from Johnny McBoyle, reporter and part owner of sister station KSWs in Roswell. KSWs had no teletype of its own but used KOAT's when it had something to go out.

McBoyle excitedly reported that one of those flying saucers everyone had been talking about had crashed near Roswell. He had seen it himself. It looked like a "big crumpled dishpan." The Army was there and was going to pick it up. Even more amazing, Army personnel were saying something about having recovered "little men" from the craft. McBoyle told her to start putting the story on the teletype immediately.

Sleppy typed as McBoyle dictated the story.

But no more than a few sentences later the teletype stopped. Assuming there was a mechanical problem, Sleppy told McBoyle what had happened. McBoyle suddenly seemed distracted. From what she could overhear, it sounded as if he were talking with someone else. Then he said to her in a strained voice, "Wait a minute. I'll get back to you." At that moment the teletype resumed working. Now it was spelling out a message apparently directed to Sleppy: "ATTENTION ALBUQUERQUE: DO NOT TRANSMIT. REPEAT DO NOT TRANSMIT THIS MESSAGE. STOP COMMUNICATION IMMEDIATELY."

Astonished, Sleppy informed McBoyle of what she was seeing. McBoyle replied tersely that she could forget what he had said, that she was not supposed to know about it.

When Friedman located McBoyle and asked him about the incident, McBoyle said, "Forget about it. . . . It never happened."

On January 20, 1978, Friedman was in New Orleans to lecture at Louisiana State University. While promoting the lecture at one of the local television stations, he was introduced to the manager who casually suggested he should talk to Maj. Jesse A. Marcel. Marcel, he said, had actually handled a UFO "way back." He had known Marcel a long time because of their mutual interest in ham radio. Friedman called Marcel, who claimed that while in the Army Air Force in New Mexico, he picked up a great quantity of material from a crashed UFO near Roswell. Friedman thought he sounded sincere and sensible, but he understood that without a great deal of confirmation from other sources this was just another anecdote about the "Ultimate Secret," as ufologists would come to call it.

He and Moore discussed the two stories and decided that since they had some names, they had something to go on, as was usually not the case with crash tales, and therefore further investigation was not only warranted but doable.

The Roswell Incident: In the next few years they

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found about 100 informants, one-third of them firsthand ones, another third family members, friends or neighbors of the direct witnesses, the last third individuals who provided useful background information. In 1980, with Charles Berlitz, Moore published a premature and much-criticized book, *The Roswell Incident*, which mixed documented material with rumor and speculation. (One critic characterized it as "about as bad a book as could be written on a subject of such potential importance" [Clark, 1981]). But Moore and Friedman continued to track down witnesses and other informants and to issue occasional reports to the UFO community. The evidence that something extraordinary had taken place, followed by an equally extraordinary cover-up, seemed all but undeniable. Within ufology the number of scoffers dwindled, and even newspaper and television reporters who looked into the story were puzzled and intrigued.

In broad outline, the story Moore and Friedman pieced together went like this:

On the evening of July 2, 1947, a Roswell couple, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Wilmot, saw a glowing object "like two inverted saucers faced mouth to mouth" passing from southeast to northwest—in the direction of Corona, 75 miles away, in Lincoln County. That same evening, as an electrical storm raged over Lincoln County, W. W. (Mac) Brazel, the manager of a sheep ranch, and two of his children (the rest of the family lived elsewhere) heard a strange explosion, unlike thunder. The next morning, when he went out to check on the sheep, Brazel found wreckage of some kind of aircraft scattered over a band a quarter-mile long and several hundred feet wide. He showed it to his brother-in-law and a few friends and heard from them for the first time about the then-new phenomenon of "flying saucers."

Brazel took the material along on a subsequent business trip to Roswell, where he brought it to the sheriff's office. The sheriff's office immediately notified Roswell Field, home of the 509th Bomb Group, the only atomic-bomb unit in

the world at the time, and Maj. Jesse Marcel, the ranking staff officer in charge of intelligence, interviewed Brazel. The base commanding officer, Col. William H. Blanchard, ordered Marcel and Sheridan "Cav" Cavitt, a Counter-Intelligence Corps agent, to the site. They found, Marcel recalled in 1979, "all kinds of stuff—small beams about 3/8ths or a half-inch square with some sort of hieroglyphics on them that nobody could decipher. These looked something like balsa wood and were of about the same weight, although flexible, and would not burn. There was a great deal of an unusual parchmentlike substance which was brown in color and extremely strong, and a great number of small pieces of a metal like tinfoil, except that it wasn't tinfoil. I was interested in electronics and kept looking for something that resembled instruments or electronic equipment, but I didn't find anything. One of the other fellows, Cavitt, I think, found a black, metallic-looking box several inches square. . . ."

The parchment symbol, Marcel said, "had little numbers and symbols that we had to call hieroglyphics because I could not understand them. They could not be read, they were just like symbols, something that meant something, and they were not all the same, but the same general pattern, I would say. They were pink and purple. They looked like they were painted on. These little numbers could not be broken, could not be burned. I even took my cigarette lighter and tried to burn the material we found that resembled parchment and balsa, but it would not burn—wouldn't even smoke."

According to Marcel, the metal was as thin as the foil in a pack of cigarettes and weighed practically nothing. But it could not be bent, or even dented, with a 16-pound sledgehammer. Nor could it be torn and cut. "It was possible to flex this stuff back and forth, even to wrinkle it, but you could not put a crease in it that would stay. . . . I would almost have to describe it as a metal with plastic properties," he said.

Others who saw the material, including Brazel's children, CIC agent Bill Rickett, and Walt Whitmore, Jr. (son of the owner of the Roswell

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radio station), all described it the same way. In 1981 Jesse Marcel, Jr., whose father had shown it to him upon his return from the site (the junior Marcel was then 12 years old), remarked that the "crash and remnants of the device left an impression on my memory that can never be forgotten. I am currently undergoing training as a Flight Surgeon in the Army Air National Guard, and have examined the remnants of many conventional aircraft that have undergone unfortunate maneuvers, and what I saw in 1947 is unlike any of the current aircraft wreckage I have studied. This craft was not conventional in any sense of the word. . . . [M]any of the remnants, including the eye-beam pieces . . . , had strange hieroglyphic type writing symbols across the inner surfaces. It appeared to me at that time that the symbols were not derived from the Greek or the Roman alphabet, nor of Egyptian origin with their animal symbols."

Meanwhile Lt. Walter Haut, public-information officer at Roswell, had alerted Associated Press, announcing, "The many rumors regarding the flying disc became a reality yesterday [July 7] when the intelligence office of the 509th Bomb Group of the Eighth Air Force, Roswell Army Air Field, was fortunate enough to gain possession of a disc . . ." Within hours the story was in the headlines of newspapers worldwide.

Soon afterwards, however, Col. Blanchard found himself at the receiving end of what the *Washington Post* called a "blistering rebuke" from his superiors, Eighth Air Force Commander Brig. Gen. Roger M. Ramey and Deputy Air Force Chief Lt. Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, who were furious about the press release. They told him they wanted the material shipped immediately to Eighth Air Force Headquarters (now Carswell AFB) in Fort Worth, Texas. So Blanchard ordered Marcel to load the material aboard a B-29 and deliver it to Ramey. From there it was to be flown, with Marcel again watching over it, to Wright Field (now Wright-Patterson AFB) where it would be analyzed.

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Ramey called in the press and said the "disc" was really just a weather balloon. As proof he displayed a weather balloon and brought in the base weather officer, Irving Newton, to identify it as such. Newton would recall that the balloon material was "very flimsy—you would have to be careful *not* to tear it"—unlike the material at Roswell. Nonetheless reporters were led to believe that the balloon and the "flying saucer" were one and the same.

In fact, the real material was secretly flown to Wright Field. Marcel was not aboard the plane. Instead, he was sent back to Roswell and warned to say nothing more. As he would tell Moore, "The cover story about the balloon [was] just to get the press off [Ramey's] back. The press was told it was just a balloon and that the flight to Wright was canceled; but all that really happened was that I was removed from the flight and someone else took it to Wright."

According to retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Thomas J. DuBose, who in July 1947 served as adjutant to Gen. Ramey's staff in Fort Worth, the order to effect a cover-up using a phony balloon identification came directly from the Pentagon, specifically from Gen. Clements McMullen. There were, DuBose said, "orders from on high to ship the material . . . directly to Wright Field by plane."

CIC officer Rickett stated, "The Air Force's explanation that it was a balloon was totally untrue. It was not a balloon. I never did know for sure exactly what its purpose was but it wasn't ours." The late Col. Blanchard's former wife Emily Simms recalled, "At first he thought it might be Russian because of the strange symbols on it. Later on, he realized it wasn't Russian either."

Brazel was held incommunicado for a week and surfaced only twice when, accompanied by agent Cavitt, he appeared at the office of the *Roswell Daily Record* and at the KGFL studio. In each case he told (under what the members of his family, Cavitt's assistant Rickett and two local reporters all have described as duress) the story

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that the Army Air Force was now circulating; that the object was only a weather balloon.

Members of the Brazel family long remembered their father's bitterness (he died in 1965) about how he had been treated. The entire family was warned not to discuss the incident. "Back in those days," Bessie Brazel recalled, "when the military told you not to talk about something, it wasn't discussed." The family says Mac Brazel died without ever telling all he knew.

During his detention the Air Force sent soldiers to the site to collect every scrap of material they could find. Aerial reconnaissance was conducted and both air and surface photographs were taken. (It was during this reconnaissance, according to several informants, most of them interviewed years later in an independent investigation by Kevin D. Randle and Don Schmitt of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, that four bodies of humanoid beings, who apparently had ejected from the craft, were located. One of these bodies was badly mangled, but the rest were intact.) The only evidence that remained was in the hands of Brazel's son Bill, who tells this story:

"The Air Force had a whole platoon of men out there picking up every piece and shred they could find. Still, every time I rode through that particular pasture I would make a point to look. Seems like every time after a good rain I would manage to find a piece or two that they had overlooked. After about a year and a half or two years I had managed to accumulate quite a small collection—about enough that if you were to lay it out on this tabletop it would take up about as much area as [a] briefcase."

Then one night in 1949 Bill Brazel visited a bar in Corona. After a few drinks he was talking about his collection of flying-saucer artifacts. The next morning a staff car from Roswell Field showed up and four soldiers, a captain and three enlisted men, came to his door. They wanted to see his collection. As Brazel showed it to them, he was told that he would have to surrender it.

"I didn't know what else to do," Brazel later related, "so I agreed. Next he wanted me to take them out to the pasture where I had found this stuff. . . . After they had poked around a bit and satisfied themselves that there didn't appear to be any more of the material out there . . . the captain . . . said that if I ever found any more of it, it was most important that I call him at Roswell right away. Naturally I said I would but I never did it because after that I never found any more."

So far non-UFO explanations of the Roswell incident have not withstood investigation. Some theorists have proposed that the object was a Skyhook balloon, part of the secret U.S. Navy Skyhook project to conduct tests in the upper atmosphere. Investigators determined that the first Skyhook balloon was launched from Camp Ripley, Minnesota, five months after the Roswell event. A number of balloon experiments *were* conducted in the Southwest in 1947, but such balloons were familiar to local people, both military and civilian, and were unlikely to be mistaken for something like the Roswell craft. When Gen. Ramey showed Irving Newton a balloon and identified it as the object recovered at Roswell, Newton was surprised that the Roswell people hadn't recognized it. "It was a regular Rawin sonde," he recalled. "They must have seen hundreds of them." Two weather-balloon crashes occurred around the same time, in Ohio, but the military quickly identified the devices and they were not sent on to higher authority as happened at Roswell. Classified rocket experiments (using V-2s) took place at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas, on June 12 and July 3 but in both cases the missiles were recovered.

Ten of the 30 firsthand witnesses Moore and Friedman interviewed identified the Roswell object as a spacecraft. The rest said simply that they had no idea what it was. The material that the officers from Roswell Field recovered was reported to be unlike anything used, then or now, in the construction of aircraft, balloons or guided missiles. Later investigators both from the mainstream media and from the UFO community

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radio station), all described it the same way. In 1981 Jesse Marcel, Jr., whose father had shown it to him upon his return from the site (the junior Marcel was then 12 years old), remarked that the "crash and remnants of the device left an impression on my memory that can never be forgotten. I am currently undergoing training as a Flight Surgeon in the Army Air National Guard, and have examined the remnants of many conventional aircraft that have undergone unfortunate maneuvers, and what I saw in 1947 is unlike any of the current aircraft wreckage I have studied. This craft was not conventional in any sense of the word. . . . [M]any of the remnants, including the eye-beam pieces . . . , had strange hieroglyphic type writing symbols across the inner surfaces. It appeared to me at that time that the symbols were not derived from the Greek or the Roman alphabet, nor of Egyptian origin with their animal symbols."

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found other informants and other evidence, but no suggestion that the Roswell material, and the bodies that some claim were associated with it, were anything less than extraordinary.

Revised History: Despite what seemed solid evidence for the Roswell incident, ufologists were puzzled by the absence of any indication in the public history of official UFO projects (Sign, Grudge and Blue Book) that anything like a UFO crash had ever occurred. To the contrary, that history painted a picture of an Air Force strangely unconcerned (except for brief periods, specifically 1947-48 and 1952) with what to others looked like extraordinarily evidential reports—among them eyewitness and instrumented sightings of structured craftlike objects whose appearance and maneuvers clearly implied, if they did not prove, the operations of an advanced technology—which presumably would have all kinds of national-security significance.

Over the years civilian investigators would regularly hear reports of UFO encounters by military personnel who were ordered not to discuss what they had seen and whose evidence (film, for example) was confiscated. As early as 1949 Donald Keyhoe, a retired Marine Corps major and aviation journalist, became convinced that a cover-up of a very big secret was in force. He wrote magazine articles and books citing government and military sources who confirmed his suspicions. Keyhoe went on to direct NICAP, which sought to enlist influential citizens and members of Congress in the struggle against UFO secrecy. Keyhoe, who died in 1988, came to believe a highly classified group of top scientists and government officials were directing the cover-up, but he could not prove it.

In the 1970s a remarkable Air Force document came to light through the Freedom of Information Act, an internal memo dated October 20, 1969, written by Brig. Gen. C. H. Bolender. In the memo, Bolender said that reports of UFOs which could affect national security were not part of the Blue Book system but were handled through the standard Air Force procedures designed for that purpose. (The full text appeared in Fawcett and

Greenwood's *Clear Intent* [1984].) To ufologists this was an astonishing admission, confirmation of a long suspicion that Blue Book was little more than a public-relations exercise and the sensitive cases were going elsewhere. But what were the "standard Air Force procedures" for handling these sensitive reports?

If the Roswell object was a UFO, ufologists concluded, the true history of the U.S. government's investigation of UFOs was hidden from public view from the very beginning. In 1983, reflecting on the Roswell evidence, Bruce Maccabee, director of the Fund for UFO Research and a U.S. Navy physicist familiar with classification procedures, considered what this hidden history may have been. In a monograph titled *Revised UFO History* he wrote:

"The Revised History proceeds from the assumption . . . that the Air Force knew by the middle of July 1947 that saucers were real and not man-made. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to add the corollary that the Air Force knew that the technology represented by the [recovered] disc . . . was so far beyond our own that it could not be understood immediately. Instead, it could take years of research in advanced physics to understand how a disc worked. Moreover, clearly whoever has discs 'wins' in a military sense. Therefore it would become necessary to treat the disc as a military secret. This would mean containing all information about it within some small group. The military agencies best equipped for *containing* information are the intelligence agencies. Therefore the disc would be placed in the custody of an intelligence arm of the Air Force."

Further, in Maccabee's view the public Air Force projects received "civilian/military verbal reports while the top Air Force generals maintain[ed] absolute secrecy about the real thing. That way they got to collect data which might have been useful without having to reveal what they knew. To the outside world it looked as if the Air Force was fulfilling its duty to investigate unknowns in the sky but with little hope of finding anything."

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The cover-up was directed by a small secret group of intelligence specialists who reported directly to the President, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Just below the group was another, larger one whose function was research, analysis and field investigation. The Air Materiel Command, the Air Technical Intelligence Center and the various public UFO projects at the bottom of this chain of command knew little or nothing of the secret work being done elsewhere, although each of these branches had at least one "mole" in its ranks. The mole's function was to be sure that the secret group learned immediately if—accidentally or otherwise—the public project got a sensitive case (such as a crash report) which was none of its business.

Maccabee believes that a principal purpose of the Air Force's relentless debunking of the subject was to discourage scientists from examining UFO data. A concerted effort by the scientific community to explain the UFO phenomenon, the engineers of the cover-up feared, might uncover the truth about extraterrestrial visitation and so reveal to the general public what was seen as the Ultimate Secret.

If Maccabee is right, it worked. Nonofficial UFO research was left in the hands of civilian ufologists lacking the technical expertise, funding or institutional support to do what needed to be done. And scientists fell victim to a sophisticated hoax.

Majestic-12: In 1982, in a lecture to the annual MUFON conference, Canadian ufologist Arthur Bray reported that a memo in his possession confirmed that authorities in Washington were covering up crashed UFOs. The memo, prepared by the late Wilbert B. Smith, a Canadian government engineer, recounted a September 15, 1950, interview, in an office of the Defense Department, with physicist Robert Sarbacher, who in answer to questions confirmed that UFOs "exist. . . . [W]e didn't make them, and it's pretty certain they didn't originate on the earth." Sarbacher refused to say more about the recovered

craft, a subject, he said, "classified two points higher even than the H-bomb. In fact it is the most highly classified subject in the U.S. Government at the present time." A small group under the direction of Vannevar Bush, President Truman's chief science advisor, was in charge of studying the wreckage.

In the 1980s other investigators, such as Stanton Friedman and Bruce Maccabee, located Sarbacher in semiretirement in Palm Beach, Florida. Sarbacher told them he had not been directly involved in the UFO project and knew only what he had been told, and he had forgotten much of that. He did recall, he told one inquirer, that "certain materials reported to have come from flying saucer crashes were extremely light and very tough" (shades of the Roswell residue). "I remember in talking with some of the people at the office," he said, "that I got the impression these 'aliens' were constructed like certain insects we have observed on earth . . ." (Good, 1988).

In December 1984 a curious item arrived in the mail at the North Hollywood, California, home of television producer Jaime Shandera. Since 1982 Shandera had been working with William Moore on the cover-up story, though on a level no investigators before them had operated, at least over an extended period of time. In September 1980 Moore had come into contact with military-intelligence personnel who were telling him that the U.S. government not only had retrieved crashed UFOs and humanoid bodies but also was in contact with the extraterrestrial intelligences responsible. Although these sources had promised massive documentary evidence to back up these extraordinary claims, little had been forthcoming. One of the few documents to be produced came to Moore from Sgt. Richard Doty, an Air Force Office of Special Investigations agent at Kirtland AFB in Albuquerque. Doty presented the document as basically authentic but indicated certain small changes had been made so that its authenticity could be denied if someone were to make a public issue of it. The document, a purported AFOSI teletype stamped SECRET and dated November 17, 1980, discusses several alleged UFO films, then concludes with a brief discussion

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(claimed by Doty and Moore to be part of the "authentic" message) of how government agencies deal with UFO data. It notes, "RESULTS OF PROJECT AQUARIUS IS [sic] STILL CLASSIFIED TOP SECRET WITH NO DISSEMINATION OUTSIDE OFFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CHANNELS AND WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS TO 'MJ TWELVE.'" "MJ TWELVE" is not defined or explained.

The item came in a manila envelope with no return address. Shandera and Moore have never revealed what the postmark indicated about the package's origin, except to say that it came from somewhere within 500 miles of Los Angeles. This has led some to speculate that the source was Albuquerque, home to both Kirtland AFB and Doty. In any case, the envelope contained a roll of 35mm film which, when developed, depicted nine pages of a document stamped TOP SECRET/MAJIC/EYES ONLY and titled BRIEFING DOCUMENT: OPERATION MAJESTIC 12/ PREPARED FOR PRESIDENT-ELECT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER: (EYES ONLY)/ 18 NOVEMBER, 1952. The briefing officer was identified as "Adm. Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter (MJ-1)." (Hillenkoetter was the first director of the CIA, a post he held between 1947 and 1950. Later he would serve for a time on the NICAP board. In 1960, in that capacity, he said publicly that "behind the scenes, high-ranking Air Force officers are soberly concerned about UFOs. But, through official secrecy and ridicule, many citizens are led to believe the unknown flying objects are nonsense. . . . [T]o hide the facts, the Air Force has silenced its personnel" [*New York Times*, February 28, 1960].)

Page two of the document stated, "OPERATION MAJESTIC-12 is a TOP SECRET Research and Development/Intelligence operation responsible directly and only to the President of the United States. Operations of the project are carried out under control of the Majestic-12 (Majic-12) Group which was established by special classified executive order of President Truman on 24 September, 1947, upon recommendation by Dr. Vannevar Bush and Secretary [of Defense] James Forrestal." The members were identified as

Hillenkoetter; Bush; Forrestal; Gen. Nathan F. Twining, Air Force Vice Chief of Staff (he had also headed the Air Materiel Command at Wright Field in 1947, when the Roswell material was shipped there); Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Air Force Chief of Staff; Detlev Bronk, a prominent scientist and a specialist in aviation physiology; Jerome Hunsaker, head of the MIT aeronautics department and chairman of the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics; Sidney W. Souers, a confidant of Truman's, first Director of Central Intelligence (predecessor to the CIA), then first Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (1947); Gordon Gray, a prominent, well-connected attorney who served in many capacities in government, including Secretary of the Army, head of the CIA's Psychology Strategy Board, and others; Donald H. Menzel, the famous Harvard University astronomer who between 1953 and 1976 would write or co-write three books debunking UFOs; Gen. Robert M. Montague, in 1947 the commander of Fort Bliss and the White Sands Proving Ground, then head of a classified (and never-revealed) special project at Sandia Base near Kirtland AFB; and Lloyd V. Berkner, first Executive Secretary of the Defense Department's Joint Research and Development Board (on which Sarbacher also served), later to serve on the CIA's January 1953 Robertson Panel (which recommend the debunking of UFO reports) and in 1957-58 as head of the International Geophysical Year. The document noted that between Forrestal's death on May 22, 1949, and August 1, 1950, his place on MJ-12 was unfilled; then "Gen. Walter B. Smith was designated as permanent replacement." Smith, who during World War II had been Eisenhower's chief of staff, had replaced Hillenkoetter as CIA director.

The document mentions the hundreds of sightings made in late June and early July 1947, when "flying saucers" first entered public consciousness, and notes how at times the public responded with "near hysteria." Then one of the objects crashed 75 miles northwest of Roswell Field. "On 07 July, 1947, a secret operation was begun to assure recovery of the wreckage. . . . During the course of this operation, aerial reconnaissance discovered that four small human-

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like beings had apparently ejected from the craft at some point before it exploded. These had fallen to earth about two miles east of the wreckage site. All four were dead and badly decomposed due to action by predators and exposure to the elements during the approximately one week time period which had elapsed before their discovery."

A "covert analytical effort" under the direction of Dr. Bush and Gen. Twining, "acting on the direct orders of the President," concluded that the crashed disc was probably a "short range reconnaissance craft." Dr. Bronk, who arranged autopsies of the bodies, deduced that despite their humanlike appearance "the biological and evolutionary processes responsible for their development has [sic] apparently been quite different from those observed or postulated in homo-sapiens. Dr. Bronk's team has suggested the term 'Extraterrestrial Biological Entities', or 'EBEs', be adopted as the standard term of reference for these creatures. . . ." Although there was some speculation that the craft had come from Mars, the document says, "some scientists, most notably Dr. Menzel, consider it more likely that we are dealing with beings from another solar system entirely."

The document goes on, "Numerous examples of what appear to be a form of writing were found in the wreckage. Efforts to decipher these have remained largely unsuccessful. . . . Equally unsuccessful have been efforts to determine the method of propulsion or the nature or method of transmission of the power source involved. . . ."

"A need for as much additional information as possible about these craft, their performance characteristics and their purpose led to the undertaking known as U.S. Air Force Project SIGN in December, 1947. In order to preserve security, liason [sic] between SIGN and Majestic-12 was limited to two individuals within the Intelligence Division of Air Materiel Command whose role was to pass along certain types of information through channels. SIGN evolved into

Project GRUDGE in December, 1948. The operation is currently being conducted under the code name BLUE BOOK, with liason [sic] maintained through the Air Force officer who is head of the project." (That officer would have been Capt. Edward J. Ruppelt, who would write one of the classic works in the UFO literature, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* [1956]. Although cautiously sympathetic to the idea of extraterrestrial visitation, Ruppelt ridicules cover-up proponents such as Donald Keyhoe. Just before the author's death in 1960, a new edition of the book came out, with three new chapters denouncing UFOs as a "Space Age myth.")

The next paragraph reads: "On 06 December, 1950, a second object, probably of similar origin, impacted the earth at high speed in the El Indio-Guerrero area of the Texas-Mexican border [sic] after following a long trajectory through the atmosphere. By the time a search team arrived, what remained of the object had been almost totally incinerated. Such material as could be recovered was transported to the A.E.C. facility at Sandia, New Mexico, for study." (Allegations about a crash along the border circulated through the UFO community in the 1970s, owing to the enthusiasms of W. Todd Zechel. Zechel, a founder of Citizens Against UFO Secrecy (CAUS), said he had heard about the crash as an Army enlisted man in Korea from a co-worker who claimed his uncle had participated in the recovery. No sooner had Zechel appeared on the UFO scene than he was enlisting financial support from film companies, television producers and book publishers so that he could conduct a proper investigation. In later years Zechel would claim to have found over 70 witnesses and informants to the event, but the names of few have ever surfaced and Zechel has never published whatever information he may have uncovered. But when the MJ-12 document became known, he asserted its account of the crash was all wrong, that the craft had come to earth relatively intact, and that the body of one of its occupants had been recovered. He charged that Moore had forged the document to discredit "his"—Zechel's—crash case even as the importance of the Roswell case was being underscored.)

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Page six of the document is an "ENUMERATION OF ATTACHMENTS." B through H are listed as Operation Majestic-12 reports. Shandera received only attachment A, a TOP SECRET EYES ONLY document on White House letterhead. Supposedly written and signed by Harry Truman, it is dated September 24, 1947, and addressed to Forrestal:

"As per our recent conversation on this matter, you are hereby authorized to proceed with all due speed and caution upon your undertaking. Hereafter this matter shall be referred to only as Operation Majestic Twelve.

"It continues to be my feeling that any future considerations relative to the ultimate disposition of this matter should rest solely with the Office of the President following appropriate discussions with yourself, Dr. Bush and the Director of Central Intelligence."

Shandera and Moore did not rush to release the document but made an effort to confirm or disconfirm it. In this they were aided, they say, by their military-intelligence sources. They received two postcards, both manufactured in Ethiopia but mailed from New Zealand, with cryptic messages directing them to Washington and the National Archives, where in July 1985 the two researchers found, amid other recently-declassified documents, a memo from President Eisenhower's assistant Gen. Robert Cutler referring to an "MJ-12 SSP [Special Studies Project] briefing" to "take place during the already scheduled White House meeting of July 16. . . ." Although nothing was said about the nature of MJ-12, this seemed clear confirmation that a project by that name did exist.

Moore and Shandera kept all this a secret, though they did show the document to fellow cover-up investigator Lee Graham, who described what he had seen to Bruce Maccabee. Maccabee wrote an article, "What the Admiral Knew: UFOs, MJ-12 and Roscoe Hillenkoetter" (*International UFO Reporter*, November/December 1986), repeating what Graham had told him, mentioning the interesting discovery in the National Archives

and relating these to other documents, claims and speculations. Maccabee's article, however, had little impact—certainly compared to what would happen when the "actual" document would be released.

In May 1987, according to Moore and Shandera, their sources informed them that a separate release of the MJ-12 document was about to take place in Europe. They learned that London ufologist Timothy Good had also been given a copy of it and would announce as much to the British press. So on May 29 Moore mailed copies to reporters and ufologists, but not before putting thick black ink through classification designations and even some of the text—a pointless endeavor for which he would be much criticized. At the same time Good released his copy. (Good has never revealed his source but insists it was *not* Moore and Shandera. In late 1989 a published account of uncertain reliability claimed it was an American CIA agent. Nonetheless, like Moore and Shandera's copy, Good's was missing all appendices except A, the alleged Truman executive order.)

The first major press article appeared on the front page of the *London Observer* on May 31. The article, which would be widely reprinted around the world, took note of the first stirrings of skepticism among ufologists, quoting Massachusetts-based investigator Barry Greenwood, a longtime student of official involvement in UFO study, as suggesting the document was a forgery. "A bitter debate is now likely to develop among UFO experts," reporter Martin Bailey wrote prophetically.

Even as ufologists were expressing wonder and doubt, such mainstream media as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *New Republic* and ABC-TV's *Nightline* were picking up the story, sparking an expression of alarm about press credulity from the *Columbia Journalism Review* and other self-styled media watchdogs. On August 20 the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) issued a widely-reported press release denouncing the document as a fake. "This represents one of the

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most deliberate attacks of deception ever perpetrated against the news media and the public," chairman Paul Kurtz charged. Soon the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies issued its own press release, refuting CSICOP's point by point and urging that further investigation would have to be conducted before any conclusion, positive or negative, could be reached.

Pro and Con on Majestic-12: The debate about the MJ-12 briefing paper raged through the rest of the decade. The battles were fought mostly within the UFO community, which remained largely doubtful. The leading critics were Greenwood and Larry Fawcett of Citizens Against UFO Secrecy (CAUS), UFO lecturer Robert Hastings and British ufologist Christopher D. Allan. A particularly fierce antagonist was CSICOP's UFO debunker Phillip J. Klass, who wrote articles, white papers and letters denouncing Moore and hinting, as discreetly as libel laws allowed, that Moore had forged the document—an accusation for which certain evidence has yet to be produced. The most energetic defender of the document (though he refused to call himself a "proponent") was Stanton Friedman, who wrote to refute critics' charges. In 1988 he received a \$16,000 grant from the Fund for UFO Research to conduct the archival work and interviews that it would take to resolve the controversy. Friedman worked hard but by the end of 1989 acknowledged that he had been unable to settle the issue.

When the controversy began, it was thought that document analysis would make a conclusive determination. But document analysts, ufologists quickly learned, were less sure; they complained that their work was seriously handicapped by the fact that they had no actual document to work with, only a photograph of a document, and the process of photography caused distortions in the type. So the battles were fought on other grounds: on the rendering of dates (the "0" as in "07 July, 1947" and "06 December, 1950" was much remarked on), the wording of the classification stamps, the verifiable physical locations of

individuals versus their locations as claimed in the documents, and so on. In time the arguments became arcane and, except to the most committed defenders and detractors, tedious. Those with the stamina to follow it generally agreed that the debunkers had produced few objections so compelling that the defenders could not reasonably answer; at the same time the defenders had been able to make only the broadest of circumstantial cases for the document's authenticity.

Of all the claims made in the document, there was only one that could not have been concocted out of a careful reading of the UFO literature of the early 1980s. This was the allegation that Donald Menzel, despite his public posture as a fierce foe of beliefs about the reality of UFOs, was privy to the Ultimate Secret and, beyond that, had the security clearances and intelligence associations *to be* privy to it. So far as ufologists—or, for that matter, his biographers—knew, Menzel was a civilian scientist no more likely to know about deep national-security secrets than his modern-day counterpart Carl Sagan would be in later decades. Intrigued by the mention of Menzel in the MJ-12 document, Friedman launched an investigation in which, after gaining access to unpublished and heretofore-unexamined papers, he found that Menzel had led a double life, one so secret that not even his closest friends knew about it. It turned out that Menzel had long been associated with both the CIA and the National Security Agency, worked on numerous classified projects for industrial companies, and possessed a Navy TOP SECRET ULTRA security clearance. Moreover, since the 1930s he had been a good friend of Vannevar Bush. Friedman speculated that, besides contributing his scientific expertise to the study of UFO remains, Menzel had served to dissuade his scientific colleagues from becoming seriously interested in the UFO phenomenon.

To critics this suggested that the MJ-12 document had been forged by official sources cognizant of Menzel's secret history. Other phony UFO documents, some associated with a disinformation campaign run out of the AFOSI

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office at Kirtland AFB, are known or strongly suspected to be the creation of military-intelligence personnel. But this, like anything else related to the document, was speculation.

The strongest *prima facie* reason to question the document's authenticity came with the discovery that the signature on Truman's disputed September 24, 1947, executive order (Appendix A) and that on an unquestioned Presidential letter of October 1 to Bush seem not just suspiciously similar but identical. Benedict K. Zobrist, director of the Harry S Truman Library, says Truman never used a signature machine; so the only other possible conclusion, critics believe, is that a hoaxer with a copy machine appended a real signature to a fictitious executive order. If this in fact is the case, that hardly makes the MJ-12 document any less mysterious. If a hoax, as it almost certainly is, it is the most sophisticated in UFO history, and intriguing questions about the identities and motivations of the hoaxers remain.

Roswell Redux: In 1988 the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies decided to reopen the Roswell case, which had lain mostly dormant in recent years as the MJ-12 issue claimed the attention and energy of Moore and Friedman. CUFOS officials felt that it might still be possible to learn more and they were unhappy with some aspects of the earlier investigation. The new effort was spearheaded by Don Schmitt, CUFOS' Director of Special Investigations, and by writer and former Air Force intelligence officer Kevin D. Randle, with some help from Friedman. By the end of 1989 Schmitt and Randle had reinterviewed all still-living informants who originally had told their stories to Moore and Friedman; they also found over 60 additional persons who were close to the incident or to individuals who had participated in the recovery. In September 1989 CUFOS brought a 10-person team, including three scientists, to the crash site in an attempt, which proved unsuccessful, to recover material (however minute) that might have remained there undetected after 42 years.

Schmitt and Randle's investigation called into question some aspects of Moore and Friedman's

reconstruction of the incident but significantly strengthened the evidence for the event's extraordinary nature. Most spectacularly, they were able to pinpoint the location at which, according to their sources, the bodies of the occupants were found (on the Brazel property, not, as Moore and Berlitz had it in *The Roswell Incident*, on the Plains of San Augustin, many miles to the west) and to learn who had participated in the recovery and what had been done to the bodies. The results of their on-going research were to be reported in 1990, first in the *International UFO Reporter* and then in a book.

Before 1989 the Roswell story, despite occasional articles about it, was little known outside the UFO community. But in the fall of that year Whitley Strieber, a novelist who had written about his abduction experiences in two much-discussed books (*Communion: A True Story* [1987] and *Transformation: The Breakthrough* [1988]), produced an imaginary version of the Roswell incident in *Majestic* (1989). He made clear, both in an afterword to the novel and in media interviews, that the novel was based on a "factual reality that has been hidden and denied." In September NBC-TV's *Unsolved Mysteries* told an abbreviated version of the incident, with actors playing some of the key figures.

A Crash in South Africa?: The latter half of 1989 also saw the emergence of two other crash-related stories which seemed likely to be the focus of attention, investigation and controversy in 1990 and beyond.

In the first of these, documents purporting to be leaked from the South African Air Force claimed that on May 7, 1989, two Mirage fighter aircraft pursued a fast-moving UFO and shot it down with, as a document stamped CLASSIFIED TOP SECRET has it, an "experimental aircraft mounted thor 2 laser canon [sic]." The account goes on:

"Squadron leader [deleted] reported that several blinding flashes emanated [sic] from the object. The object started wavering whilst still heading in a northerly direction. At [illegible] it was

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reported that the object was decreasing altitude at a rate of 3000 feet per minute. Then at great speed it dived at an angle of 25 degrees and impacted in desert terrain 80km north of South African border with Botswana, identified as the Central Kalahari Desert. Squadron leader [deleted] was instructed to circle the area until a retrieval [sic] of the object was complete. A team of airforce intelligence officers, together with medical and technical staff[,] were promptly taken to area of impact for investigation and retrieval [sic].

"The findings were as follows:

"1) A crater of 150 metres in diameter and 12 metres in depth.

"2) A silver coloured disc shaped object 45 degrees embedded in side of crater.

"3) Around object sand and rocks were fused together by the intense heat.

"4) An intense magnetic and radioactive environment around object resulted in electronic failure in air force equipment.

"5) It was suggested by team leader that object be moved to a classified air force base . . . for further investigation and this was done."

According to subsequent reports, though not from very reliable sources, occupants were found at the crash site. The wreckage and the bodies were shipped to Wright-Patterson AFB in Ohio in exchange for advanced American weapons technology. An informant claiming to be a South African Air Force man involved in the event surfaced and fled to England, then to an unnamed South American country. He was interviewed in hiding by a prominent American ufologist.

Details remained both murky and scant at year's end. Ufologists investigating the claim were intrigued but deeply suspicious. If a hoax, it appeared to be a complex and expensive one,

raising new concerns about the continuing spread of disinformation, apparently with official sponsorship, about crashed-disc claims.

Mystery in Nevada: An even more remarkable development came from outside the UFO community. In November KLAS-TV in Las Vegas devoted two nights to the astonishing testimony of one Robert Lazar.

Area 51 is situated at a corner of the Nevada Test Site, where highly-classified national-security work has been conducted for several decades. Spy planes such as the U-2 and the SR-71 were developed there. It is also the place where government scientists and engineers planned and experimented with the technology that brought the Stealth aircraft into being and where the technology of the Strategic Defense Initiative (popularly known as "Star Wars") was created. The CIA has developed sophisticated devices there. Area 51 is in a remote location ringed by the Groom Mountains and vast desert expanses.

It is also a place over which odd lights, maneuvering in ways conventional aircraft do not, flying at great speeds, stopping suddenly and hovering, have been reported for some time. These sightings, plus other stories from sources of varying credibility, have sparked rumors that the technology being developed at Area 51 is not entirely earthly in origin.

On November 11 and 13 KLAS reporter George Knapp told the story of Bob Lazar, allegedly a physicist who worked at Area 51 called S-4, where he saw, in Lazar's words, "nine . . . flying discs that are out there of extraterrestrial origin." Knapp said he had been employed by the Navy and when he went to S-4, he assumed he was to work on advanced propulsion systems. The first day he was there, he was given briefing papers to read and quickly realized that the propulsion systems were advanced beyond anything he could have imagined. "The power source is an anti-matter reactor," he told Knapp. "They run gravity amplifiers. There is [sic] actually two parts to the drive mechanism. It's a bizarre technology. There is [sic] no physical hookups between any of the

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systems in there. They use gravity as a wave, using wave guides that look like microwaves."

Lazar said the work areas were peppered with posters showing a disc-shaped craft lifted three feet off the ground, with the caption "They're here." Only later, however, did he see the real thing, when he was led into a hangar and directed to walk past the disc without looking directly at it or saying anything about it. But as he passed it, he could not resist the temptation to put his hand on it. Subsequently, he said, he was permitted to see the craft flown. He also saw the other eight craft in connecting hangars separated by large bay doors. All had a different shape, but all were generally discoid in form. One, he said, "looked new, if I knew what a new flying saucer looked like. One of them looked like it was hit with some sort of a projectile. It had a large hole in the bottom and a large hole in the top with the metal bent out like some sort of . . . large caliber four- or five-inch had gone through it."

Although Lazar was told nothing about the nature and origin of these vehicles, once he looked inside the "sport model" (as he called the craft that looked newest) and saw "it had really small chairs." He was shocked. Before this, he had been able to tell himself that the project he was working on was not so strange and unearthly as he sometimes suspected it was, but now "things began to click together just all too fast." When he got to see the craft actually being flown, he knew such achievements could not possibly have come solely from terrestrial knowledge, however advanced. Even more telling to him was his discovery that an element, called 115 and unknown to earthly science, was being used in the development of the gravity-harnessing technology. The U.S. government, he said, has 500 pounds of it stored in lead casings. He said it would be "impossible to synthesize an element that heavy here on earth. . . . The substance has to come from a place where super-heavy elements could have been produced naturally."

He speculated that not even Congress knew about the project ("they don't report to anyone") and that it was unlikely it would ever be an-

nounced to the American people. In his view the funding probably came out of the Star Wars project.

Working at the site was not a pleasant occupation, according to Lazar. Security was enforced by constant fear in which "they did everything but physically hurt me," even putting a gun to his head. "They did that even in the original security briefing," he said. "Guards there with M-16s. Guys there slamming their fingers into my chest, screaming into my ear. They were pointing guns at me." He said security personnel even came to his house periodically and threatened his and his wife's lives, all as part of an effort to make sure they never talked.

Knapp interviewed Gene Huff, a Las Vegas real-estate appraiser and Lazar's neighbor, to whom Lazar eventually confided his story. At one point, according to Huff, he, Lazar and a few others managed over two consecutive weekends to film the maneuvers of a fast-moving, glowing object which rose up from the Groom Mountains and maneuvered in the sky for a period of time. The KLAS presentation showed the videotape.

"Checking out Lazar's credentials proved to be a difficult task," Knapp reported. Other investigators, notably Stanton T. Friedman, found the same thing. Lazar claimed, for example, to have degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which denies ever having heard of him. A claimed association with the California Institute of Technology also failed to check out. Although claiming to be a physicist, he is not a member of the American Physical Society. A check with the Social Security Administration established that a card with the numbers Lazar gives was assigned to a Robert Lazar. Lazar also said he had worked with one of the world's largest particle-beam accelerators at the Los Alamos National Laboratories. But when Los Alamos later denied any knowledge of his employment there, Knapp found it was "either mistaken or . . . lying. A 1982 phone book from the lab lists Lazar right there among the other scientists and technicians. A 1982 news clipping from the Los Alamos newspaper profiled Lazar and his interest in jet cars.

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It, too, mentioned his employment at the lab as a physicist."

Lazar says, "They're trying to make me look nonexistent . . . [at] the schools I went to; the hospital that I was born at; past jobs. Nothing comes up with my name on it."

As part of his investigation, Knapp had Lazar undergo a polygraph examination. One examiner gave him two tests, one of which indicated truthfulness, the other deception. A second examiner put Lazar through four tests and found no evidence of any attempt to deceive. A third polygrapher examined the charts and agreed with the second examiner's conclusions. A fourth examiner disagreed, saying it looked to him as if Lazar were reporting something he had heard, not something he had personally experienced. In his televised report Knapp said, "The polygraphers . . . decided they would not issue a final statement on truthfulness until more specific testing can be conducted. And that's where it stands." The second polygrapher expressed the opinion that the ambiguities in the test results were caused not by lies but by Lazar's fears and anxieties.

Knapp also arranged for Lazar to undergo hypnosis, in part because Lazar said he suspected mind-control techniques had been used on him to make him forget much of what he had seen or heard. The hypnotist, Layne Keck, was told only that Lazar wanted aid in recalling the contents of briefing papers (contents unspecified) he had seen. Keck later told Knapp, "I have no clue as to what we were getting into and he started saying that there were pictures of what I thought was [sic] desks on the wall. Well, as it turned out, it was discs that he was referring to. And at that moment I realized we were into something that was pretty heavy."

Keck concluded that Lazar was telling the truth as he saw it. He said it appeared that Lazar had been subjected to mind manipulation, including chemicals, both to frighten him and to dim his memory.

Lazar acknowledged that "I'm not going to change anyone's mind. . . . I don't expect anyone to believe it." But Knapp stated on the television program that he *does* believe Lazar for a number of reasons, not the least of them the man's reluctance to appear on the show, his unwillingness to profit from his experiences, and his neighbor's testimony. More important, Knapp said he had interviewed other individuals, all unnamed, who said it is "common knowledge among those with high-security clearances that recovered alien discs are stored at the Nevada Test Site," as a "technician in a highly-sensitive position" put it. Other sources—a "Las Vegas professional, who once served in the military and was stationed at the test site"; a "man who once worked at Groom Lake as a technician"; and an "airman who worked at Nellis [AFB] at a radar installation"—told Knapp stories of discs they had seen on the ground or in the air.

At year's end journalist Knapp was continuing his investigation, and ufologists were also following leads. The Lazar saga had just begun. It seems safe to say that the crashed-disc controversy would be at the forefront of 1990s ufology.

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