

UFOs AND COMMERCIAL AIR TRAFFIC

Part 2 How Project Blue Book could be involved

By David Brobeck Jr.

RETURNING to the imaginary litigation which I proposed at the outset in Part I of this article, Mary Doe, the plaintiff, is bringing a survival action against three named defendants. The most deeply involved is the U.S. Government, since the acts of both the FAA controllers and the Air Force Project Blue Book officials are under attack. The plaintiff's evidence against the Air Force handling of the situation would undoubtedly include a résumé of the Air Force's UFO investigatory activities; the historical perspective is crucial in proving the alleged negligence.

As a result of a flurry of sightings throughout the United States in 1947, Lt.-Gen. Nathan Twining, Commander of the Air Material Command, requested an investigation be instigated, and stated that there was "sufficient substance to the reports to warrant detailed study."²⁰ Thus, "Project Sign" came into being on February 11, 1948. Approximately one year later, in February of 1949, Project Sign was published, stating that on the basis of 243 of the "best documented" reports studied, "no definite evidence was available to confirm or disprove the actual existence of unidentified flying objects as new and unknown types of aircraft."²¹ The following year the project name was changed to "Grudge," and the conclusions of this report were two-fold. First, it was stated that the phenomena presented *no threat* to the security of the United States, and secondly, that the vast majority of the sightings could be attributed to misrepresentations of known objects.²² Finally, in March of 1952, the Air Force was awarded the job of evaluating any possible threat that such objects might pose; the designated name, "Project Blue Book", has not changed since that time.

Blue Book objectives

Project Blue Book has two stated objectives: First, "to determine whether UFOs pose a threat to the security of the United States"; and second, "to determine whether UFOs exhibit any unique scientific information or advanced technology which could contribute to scientific or technical research."²³

The Air Force position of "no threat" has been reiterated in recent years as well. Early in 1966, an *ad hoc* committee of the USAF Scientific Advisory Board reviewed the resources, methods, and conclusions of Project Blue Book. Although a strengthening of the project staff and initiation of an in-depth study on selected cases were among the recommendations, the Board concluded that "in the 19 years since the first UFO was sighted there has been no evidence that unidentified flying objects are a threat to our national security."²⁴ The same policy was repeated, almost verbatim, on April 5, 1966, when Dr. J. Allen Hynek, accompanied by Dr. Harold Brown, Secretary of the Air Force, and Major Hector Quintanilla, Jr., UFO Project Officer, appeared before the House Committee on

Armed Services. In one part of his testimony, Dr. Brown assured the Committee that "The Air Force will continue to investigate such phenomena with an open mind and with the finest technical equipment available."²⁵

Blue Book staff

However, certain facts about the Project itself seem to indicate that "the finest technical equipment available" is not an apt description of its priority. Although the Air Force does have at its disposal numerous scientific consultants in the form of selected scientific advisers and some governmental agencies, the Project Blue Book staff itself consists (at time of writing) of an Air Force Major, Hector Quintanilla, and his staff of four—a first lieutenant, a staff sergeant, a secretary, and a part-time typist. Although Quintanilla is well qualified, the importance of the project as rated by the Air Force is shown by the fact that no officer above the rank of Major has ever been assigned to it on a permanent basis. Until recently, Blue Book occupied one 18-30ft. room in the Air Technical Intelligence Command building of the Wright-Patterson base. Thus, it appears that many of the quick and often widely disputed "explanations" for sightings provided by Blue Book may be due to a lack of resources for thorough investigatory activity, rather than to a desire to suppress information. Public opposition to their official pronouncements is reflected by a statement from the staff of *Life* magazine: "During the ensuing year there will be authenticated sightings of roughly 200 Unidentified Flying Objects, of which the Pentagon will be able to disprove 210."²⁶

Clear evidence of undue secrecy or "cover-ups" coupled with a failure to investigate important sightings would most certainly strengthen the plaintiff's allegations of "wilful and . . . wanton disregard for the safety and welfare of the passengers. . . ." I have already referred to Air Force Regulation 200-2 and the provision for withholding information unless a sighting has been positively identified as a familiar or known object. What motive the Air Force would have for a deliberate cover-up is unclear, but many are known to have occurred. One such incident, which appropriately enough involved a commercial airline pilot's report, is mentioned by the former head of Project Blue Book, Captain Edward J. Ruppelt, in his excellent book referred to earlier.

Typical Blue Book "explanation"

When the report came in from airline pilots Lawrence Vinther and James Bachmeier of their experience of being buzzed by a cigar-shaped object as they were taking off from Sioux City, Iowa (see p. 5), Captain Ruppelt witnessed the reaction by Air Force investigators. The sighting was treated as a joke; the

"investigator" merely located an Air Force bomber near Sioux City and blamed it for the sighting. Captain Ruppelt commented on the arbitrary "explanation" by pointing out the absurdity of a bomber buzzing an airliner in an airport traffic pattern.²⁷ There was no investigation in this case, and one cannot help but wonder as to how many other such counter-to-fact "explanations" have been promulgated in past years.

In recent years there have been an increasing number of prominent scientists and legislators who have indicated their recognition of and objection to the Air Force policy of secrecy and misrepresentation on matters involving UFOs. In 1965, the Honourable John McCormack, Speaker of the House, stated:

"I feel that the Air Force has not been giving out all the available information on these Unidentified Flying Objects. You cannot disregard so many unimpeachable sources."²⁸

The *Yale Scientific Magazine's* criticism was expressed thus:

"Based upon unreliable and unscientific surmises as data, the Air Force develops elaborate statistical findings which

seem impressive to the uninitiated public, unschooled in the fallacies of the statistical method. One must conclude that the highly publicized periodic Air Force pronouncements based upon unsound statistics serve merely to misrepresent the true character of UFO phenomena."²⁹

In Part III of this article I will examine possible FAA liability in this hypothetical case.

NOTES

- 20 *The Unidentified Flying Object Program* U.S. Air Force summary outline prepared by Project BLUE BOOK, p. 2.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 23 Project Blue Book, *Special Report No. 14 (Analysis of Reports of Unidentified Aerial Objects)* Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio; Air Technical Intelligence Center, May 5, 1955), p. 1.
- 24 Dr. Brien O'Brien and others, "Special Report on the USAF Scientific Advisory Board Ad Hoc Committee to review Project 'Blue Book'," March 1966, p. 2.
- 25 U.S. Congress. House Committee on Armed Services. *Unidentified Flying Objects. Hearing by the Committee on Armed Services.* (89th Congress, 2nd session, April 5, 1966), p. 5992.
- 26 *Life* magazine, January 6, 1958, p. 16.
- 27 Ruppelt, Edward J., *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120; *The UFO Evidence, op. cit.*, p. 117.
- 28 *True* magazine; January, 1965.
- 29 *Yale Scientific Magazine*, Yale University, Volume XXXVII, No. 7, April 1963.

L. SCHÖNHERR NOTES (continued from p.13)

If one observes the different properties A, B, C . . . repeatedly in a certain connection (and a UFO wave or a sighting may rightly be regarded as such) it seems fairly methodological to assume that A, B, C . . . are different aspects or effects of one and the same basic cause. It is not probable that different and independent causes combine repeatedly in such a manner as to simulate one single cause.

- 8 (ii) Explanations assuming that all UFOs are animals controlled by a mere animal intelligence have first to account convincingly for the landing reports. The author of the article mentioned above (7) suggested that frightened witnesses could have mistaken the tentacles of UFO animals for human-like entities. This is hardly the manner in which one could dispose of all the entity reports and contacts.

- 8 (iii) If only some UFOs are animals they are very probably brought into action by the same intelligence that is responsible for the other part of the UFO phenomenon. They could be a sort of guinea-pig for the testing of long-term effects of our environment upon them.

As they would have to be recovered they would most likely be earthbound creatures with limited mobility exposed in inaccessible areas. Recovery of airborne beings would be difficult if not impossible. One could think of a special direction finding or homing instinct as observed in carrier pigeons. But would they then stay long enough?

It is also very doubtful whether creatures would be chosen whose play instinct could only endanger them unnecessarily.

- 9 *UFOs and the Fourth Dimension*. Part 1, FSR March/April 1963; Part 2, FSR January/February 1964; Part 3, FSR November/December 1965.

- 10 There are cases on record in which the movements of such luminous objects were rather of a kind that one is tempted to assume that a sort of "scanning" took place. (See Aimé Michel: *Flying Saucers and the Straight Line Mystery*, pp. 115-116, October 3, 1954 Herissart to Amiens.)

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