

QUESTIONS ON AQUARIUS

by Christian P. Lambright

It has been said that there are three kinds of people, those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder...what happened...? It seems that nothing more true could be said of the types of people involved in the arena of UFO interest. The recent controversy concerning the alleged project entitled "AQUARIUS" and the control group labeled "MJ-12" seems a prime example of the confusion that results from lack of communication between interested parties. Is there a project AQUARIUS which deals with UFOs? Who first discovered that such a project existed? If the documentation supporting the existence of an "MJ-12" group is valid, as some contend, then why does it appear full of discrepancies? These are questions that need to be addressed before any attempt can be made to judge the validity of the issues.

As any good detective can tell, motivation is a helpful key in solving any crime or mystery. Who would stand to gain by the situation at hand? Perhaps a little of this line of reasoning would help in solving the current mystery of AQUARIUS/MJ-12. The revelation of a UFO-related project by the name of AQUARIUS first appeared on the scene in what has commonly been referred to as the "NASA-telex" [AQUARIUS.DOC]. This is the allegedly genuine document which describes several pieces of photographic film relating to incidents at Kirtland AFB and the case of Paul Bennewitz. As most knowledgeable people are aware, this document relates quite a bit of interesting information pertaining to official interest in UFOs as well as mentioning the existence of project AQUARIUS and something called "MJ-12".

However, several key areas in this document were deleted by either the original source or by the recipient. It is interesting to note that there is a retyped version of this document which has circulated with the deletions filled-in, but with no explanation as to who retyped it or how the previously deleted areas were uncovered.

Reportedly Peter Gersten was shown this document in 1983 and so it would seem that it has been around for several years. But if Gersten was the original recipient he has not revealed where he obtained it or from whom. This document would appear to be closely tied to the events at Kirtland AFB in 1980 inasmuch as it mentions Bennewitz and the Air Force interest in UFO sightings over military bases. Could the release of this document be related to the release of the initial document(s) concerning the events at Kirtland? [KIRTLND1.DOC, KIRTLND2.DOC] William Moore has stated that he was first given the initial Kirtland documents in Washington DC in early 1982 by an unnamed source. And there have been several rumors circulated concerning heated arguments between Moore and Gersten over the means by which Gersten obtained these documents. Rumors aside, if Moore received his documents over one year _after_ the incidents occurred then whoever gave him these copies must have had access to them either from AFOSI files in Washington or from the original sender at Kirtland. There are indications that William Moore received his copies from Richard Doty, the AFOSI Special Agent at Kirtland AFB. Other sources have also reported that Doty was involved in an effort to get information of this nature out to certain individuals for purposes unknown. And so it seems possible that Doty was responsible for the Kirtland documents and perhaps the "NASA-telex" being released as he would have been in a position to have access to such information.

mation. Regardless, it would fall to serious UFO researchers to attempt to verify if the documents conveyed valid information, or disinformation.

As interest began to focus on AQUARIUS and "MJ-12" several different FOIA requests were filed with various government agencies to try to garnish information on these subjects, but as recently as 1986 most of the leading figures in Ufology were convinced that the document was a forgery and that Project AQUARIUS was nonexistent. In 1985 I had filed several different requests with government agencies requesting information on three projects: Sigma, Snowbird and Aquarius; as well as any information pertaining to MJ-12 or Majestic-12. I specifically did not mention any connection or interest dealing with UFOs in these requests. With the exception of the National Security Agency every response I received was a denial of any knowledge of any of these subjects or titles. While they stated that Sigma and Snowbird were "not projects of this agency" and that they had no knowledge of MJ-12, they estimated that search fees for all information on Project AQUARIUS would be \$15,000! It would appear that this is a rather expansive project. After several subsequent requests for clarification and to simply send the initial document which initiated the project the NSA stated that the project did not deal with "UFOs" and that as I would not be paying the fees they were concluding action on my requests. Subsequent appeals only clarified that Project AQUARIUS was classified Top Secret and that release of any portion of it could pose "grave danger to the national security." [AQUANSA.DOC]

Several individuals have considered the statement by the NSA that AQUARIUS does not deal with UFOs to be patently honest, and perhaps this

is the truth. However I believe that to have expected the NSA to "roll-over" and openly reveal otherwise would be naive to say the least. It seems paradoxical that some "researchers" both expect these agencies to be deceptive but will readily accept some statements as totally accurate. I believe that there are sufficient reasons to suspect that the NSA project may actually be the project which is indicated in the "NASA-telex" which originally mentioned it and MJ-12.

In the process of trying to verify the above document I had addressed a series of letters to what was designated the 7602 Air Intelligence Group (7602 AINTELG), as of 1983 known as the Air Force Special Activities Center. A Branch of the Air Force Intelligence Service, the 7602 AINTELG deals with human resource intelligence, much the same as the 4602 AINTELG which is known to have aided Edward Ruppelt in his investigations several years ago. This may or may not be coincidence and could be an interesting avenue for further research. Nevertheless, in the process of trying to get information on this group I had been receiving somewhat evasive response letters from AFIS. In a conversation with an Air Force source in which I had referred to my problems in obtaining information on this group I was informed that perhaps this is due to the fact that "they are a branch of the NSA!" This was at the time my first indication that there may be some NSA involvement, and was prior to my letters to NSA itself. Within a few months I was to learn another interesting fact pointing to the NSA.

With the aid of well-known research Thomas Adams I was notified of a person who reportedly had heard a very interesting statement concerning the initial AQUARIUS/MJ-12 document. After speaking with this gentleman

personally I was firmly convinced that the information he was relating was accurate as it had been told to him. He related that he had been told personally that this document had been changed in two ways, and that he had been told this by the individual who had changed it. Although both changes were not revealed, he had been told that the reference in the document to "NASA" had originally been "NSA"! And who was the person doing the telling ...none other than William Moore. In a brief conversation with Moore after this in which I asked him if he had any knowledge of this he simply stated "No comment."

The recent issue of JUST CAUSE also contains the statement by Larry Fawcett and Barry Greenwood that they have been told that this document is actually a retyped version. This fact was reportedly revealed in 1983 to Peter Gersten by an Air Force officer and was either forgotten or overlooked until just recently. However, the Air Force source who is cited is said to be none other than Richard Doty himself.

In light of the fact that it has recently become common knowledge that Mr. Moore does (for his own reasons) delete documents which he obtains, and that he is rather aggressive in his research, I believe that Mr. Moore did in fact retype or have this document retyped. But does this negate the value of the document, or indicate that it is a hoax? Perhaps this explains why no one can verify if the document is genuine, because technically it is a forgery. It would appear that it is up to Mr. Moore to reveal a clean, accurate version and to finally reveal the facts behind its acquisition.

According to film producer and director Linda Moulton Howe, she has had independent confirmation of MJ-12 and reportedly was shown a set of

documents containing much of the same, if not identical, information. However, the actual name of the group in question was not "Majestic" but another similar sounding word containing the letters M and J. Could it be that the term "Majestic" was a substitution in a clever attempt to withhold a key bit of information which only someone with true inside information would be able to identify?

If there is reason to question the accuracy of the information presented in the original AQUARIUS/MJ-12 document as well as the information in the recent documents pertaining to MJ-12, does this logically imply that the 1980 Kirtland/Bennewitz events should be considered questionable? Any single-witness UFO sighting has always been somewhat questionable, this is exactly why we look for multiple witnesses and any other supporting evidence. If Richard Doty, or Paul Bennewitz were alone in reporting these incidents then the Kirtland events would never have become as major an issue as they have. However there were numerous individuals involved not only in the events precipitating the documents but in the preparation of the documents themselves. A brief summary of the incidents is as follows:

Early 1980, Paul Bennewitz becomes involved in observing and filming objects which he has sighted on the ground and in the air near Kirtland AFB and the Manzano range. Reportedly his wife was also present to witness some of the first landings he witnessed and filmed in the Coyote Canyon area. Subsequently he contacts Earnest Edwards of the Kirtland Security Police who, over the period of the next few months, becomes concerned and requests the guards on the Manzano Weapons Storage Area report to him any sightings of unusual aerial

lights. At the beginning of August 1980 three guards report sighting an aerial light which descends on the Sandia Military Reservation. This is the first sighting described in the complaint form signed by Richard Doty. Edwards reports the sighting to Doty unaware that Doty has already heard from Russ Curtis (Sandia Security Chief) that a Sandia Security guard sighted a disc-shaped object near a structure just minutes after the sighting by the three Manzano guards. Doty includes these reports and several others in his Complaint Form and forwards the report to AFOSI Headquarters in Washington.

From this point on many other persons became involved. Bennewitz was called down to a meeting at Kirtland AFB at which several major Air Force officers and Sandia personnel were present, including a Brigadier General. Earnest Edwards has confirmed that the three guards under his command reported what was described, and that the meeting took place. Bennewitz has confirmed that Doty and Jerry Miller came to his home to view his materials and there is a document signed by Thomas A. Cseh, Commander of the Base Investigative Detachment, to confirm this. Finally there is the complete set of documents which were released by AFOSI Headquarters under cover of the Department of the Air Force relating to the described events.

There seem to be only two possibilities to consider. One: that this is one of the most profound deceptions that has been undertaken with the sanction of the USAF, involving a civilian, for purposes which can only be imagined. The other: that the events happened as described and that the intervening years, subsequent developments, and misguided researchers, have only clouded the facts. Perhaps there was also some effort made on an

official level to defuse the sensitive nature of the events.

Would Richard Doty have perpetrated a hoax, involved other officers in his deception, sent the hoax on to AFOSI Headquarters, and then spread certain information to civilian UFO researchers? For what purpose? And would he still be in the Air Force if he was discovered, knowing the public relations catastrophe that could result from AFOSI in Washington releasing the subsequent documents? It seems inconceivable that the Base Investigative Detachment, and the Department of the Air Force, would not have quickly and easily discovered the hoax and subsequently labeled the entire matter as such, knowing their previous predilection to do just that.

A few simple telephone calls have served to clarify much of the truth of the initial incidents. We must avoid the temptation at times to "shoot first and ask questions later" which can result in spreading misinformation ourselves. It is advisable to use tact in approaching witnesses as we have no God-given right to call up strangers and demand that they answer questions, particularly when sensitive matters may be involved. Is it any surprise that some of these people may not want to be bothered by every person who plies them with questions?

A very bizarre but intriguing letter was sent to APRO in either late 1980 or early 1981 and is commonly referred to by the name of the initial subject of the letter, a Mr. Craig Weitzel. This letter refers to a sequence of events which occurred in the mid-1980's at both Kirtland AFB and in an area near Pecos, NM and also makes several statements to the effect that there is a UFO-investigation detachment stationed at or near Kirtland. The writer also goes on to mention among other things that there is

at least one "object" stored in the Manzano storage area. That the letter was at least legitimately received at APRO can be ascertained by the vehement letter which Jim Lorenzen mailed out rebuking the gentleman who released this letter without official permission from APRO. However, can we determine if this letter is a total hoax or is there even a grain of truth to be found in the information it conveys? In a conversation I had with Craig Weitzel he claimed to know nothing of the details related in the letter, and denied that he took any photographs. Strangely enough, however, he did state that he and the other did see an unusual silvery object hovering high in the sky which left the area, to use his words, "exponentially"! He had been training in mountain rescue operations and he and the others had spelled out S-O-S on the mountain side using parachutes and were waiting for the rescue helicopters to spot them. While looking for these helicopters they noticed the silvery "UFO". If this is all that occurred what could be the reason to fabricate such a letter and yet give the name and address of a witness who was sure to refute the claims? Was it just a bizarre practical joke? The author of the anonymous letter claims that after Weitzel spoke with AFOSI agent Dody (sic) he did not want to have anything more to do with the matter and subsequently the Dody character denied that there had been any photographs. Was this a circumstance that could have been expected based on previous experience with Air Force handling of such matters? Many government and military witnesses often refuse to talk about their experiences to strangers either because of official pressure or simply for the sake of their own privacy. Motivation again must be considered in efforts to find the complete truth.

In early October 1987 I had a strange conversation with an individual who is unknown to me except by first name and who initially knew absolutely nothing about my interest in UFOs. During a telephone conversation which took place totally by chance, the subject of nuclear weapons came up as this person indicated some knowledge of this weaponry, being at the time a member of the Air Force. I jokingly asked to know everything there was to know about Kirtland AFB, but not due to my interest in nuclear weapons per se but because of something else I thought may be stored at Manzano that "isn't nuclear weapons." After a momentary chuckle this individual said, "yes...UFOs!" As astounded as I was I asked for a little clarification, and after relating my interest, I was told that there are two "objects" stored in the Manzano area from what this person had heard during conversations by Air Force personnel in Germany. There had been some discussion about something which was related to a UFO incident widely reported in German newspapers in 1981 being similar to something which "they" had "over here." Because of the circumstances under which this conversation occurred and the fact that I had in no way even alluded to the subject I believe that this may offer some support to some of the statements made in the anonymous "Weitzel" letter.

A final note of interest has come up in the newly released book on the "flying boomerang" objects reported in recent years in and around New York state [NIGHT SIEGE, Ballantine 1987]. In the process of investigating these incidents Hynek and Imbrogno were contacted by an individual who claimed to work for the NSA. They apparently verified this to their own satisfaction, and while this person professed that his interest was only personal, they were struck by the inordinate amount of interest this per-

son showed in their investigations and any evidence they uncovered. There are even indications that their telephones may have been tapped. While it is unknown if this man's interest went further than personal curiosity, it is clear that the investigators felt there was something unusual about it. Nevertheless, here is yet another instance in which the National Security Agency seems to have crept into the picture.

Do the facts as outlined here cast reasonable suspicion on the NSA and its part in official interest in unidentified flying objects? I believe that they do and that there is justifiable cause to suspect that the project AQUARIUS which relates (at least in some way) to UFOs is probably an NSA, or NSA related project. It also still seems that in spite of the arguments and confusion concerning documents, the designation "MJ-12" must be considered if not a certainty, than at least potentially valid. Those who have taken the time to contact witnesses and obtain their statements and help, have the best chance to make up their minds for themselves, regardless of the confusion concerning altered documents which seems to be precipitating furiously. We do not want to throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water simply because the facts seem confusing. Perhaps even the confusion is being directed by someone somewhere. We should keep our sights fixed firmly on the major issues and the facts we can prove in our efforts to uncover the truth.

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Thanks to all those sources both named and unnamed who have contributed to the facts outlined here.

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