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 won-

der...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 con-

troversy concerning the alleged project entitled "AQUARIUS" and the ${\tt con-}$

trol group labeled "MJ-12" seems a prime example of the confusion that re-

sults 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 dis-

crepancies? These are questions that need to be addressed before any at-

tempt can be made to judge the validity of the issues.

As any good detective can tell, motivation is a helpful key in solv-

ing 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 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{E}}$

genuine document which describes several pieces of photographic film relat-

ing to incidents at Kirtland AFB and the case of Paul Bennewitz. As most

knowledgeable people are aware, this document relates quite a bit of inter-

esting information pertaining to official interest in UFOs as well as men-

tioning 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 dele-

tions 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 Kirt-

land AFB in 1980 inasmuch as it mentions Bennewitz and the Air Force inter-

est in UFO sightings over military bases. Could the release of this docu-

ment 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 circu-

lated 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 indica-

tions that William Moore received his copies from Richard Doty, the ${\tt AFOSI}$

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 infor-

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 garn-

ish 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 excep- $\,$

tion of the National Security Agency every response I received was a de-

nial of any knowledge of any of these subjects or titles. While they sta-

ted 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 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{my}}\xspace \ensuremath{\mathsf{re-}}\xspace$

quests. 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 $% \left(1\right) =\left(1\right) +\left(1\right) +\left$

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 $\ensuremath{\mathtt{NSA}}$ 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 ad-

dressed a series of letters to what was designated the 7602 Air Intel-

ligence Group (7602 AINTELG), as of 1983 known as the Air Force Special $\left(\frac{1}{2} \right)$

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 investi-

gations 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 it-

self. 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 per-

sonally 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

 \ldots 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 over-

looked 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 ob-

tains, 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 $\ensuremath{\text{MJ-12}}$

documents containing much of the same, if not identical, information. How-

ever, the actual name of the group in question was not "Majestic" but an-

other similar sounding word containing the letters ${\tt M}$ and ${\tt J}$. Could it be

that the term "Majestic" was a substitution in a clever attempt to with-

hold a key bit of information which only someone with true inside inform- $\,$

ation would be able to identify?

If there is reason to question the accuracy of the information pre-

sented 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 support-

ing 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 fol-

lows:

Early 1980, Paul Bennewitz becomes involved in observing and filming

objects which he has sighted on the ground and in the air near $\mbox{\ensuremath{\mbox{Kirt-}}}$

land AFB and the Manzano range. Reportedly his wife was also present

to witness some of the first landings he witnessed and filmed in the $% \left(1\right) =\left(1\right) +\left(1\right$

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.

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 $% \left(1\right) =\left(1\right) +\left(1\right) +$

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 re-

ported what was described, and that the meeting took place. Bennewitz has

confirmed that Doty and Jerry Miller came to his home to view his mater-

ials and there is a document signed by Thomas A. Cseh, Commander of the

Base Investigative Detachment, to confirm this. Finally there is the $\operatorname{\mathsf{com-}}$

plete 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? If 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 mis-

information ourselves. It is advisable to use tact in approaching wit-

nesses as we have no God-given right to call up strangers and demand that

they answer questions, particularly when sensitive matters may be in-

volved. 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 se-

quence 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 Kirt-

land. 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 vehe-

ment letter which Jim Lorenzen mailed out rebuking the gentleman who re-

leased 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, how-

ever, he $_\operatorname{did}_$ 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 notices 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 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{Dody}}$

character denied that there had been any photographs. Was this a circum-

stance 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. Motiva-

tion again must be considered in efforts to find the complete truth.

In early October 1987 I had a strange conversation with an indivi-

dual who is unknown to me except by first name and who initially knew

absolutely nothing about my interest in UFOs. During a telephone conversa-

tion 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 nuc-

lear 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 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{I}}$

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 be-

lieve 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, re-

gardless 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.

END

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

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