

WHY KECKSBURG? A LOOK AT THE CASE IN CONTEXT

PROJECT MOONDUST AND OPERATION BLUE FLY: THE RETREIVAL OF OBJECTS OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN

In September 1947, Lt. General Nathan Twining, Commander of Air Material Command at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, wrote an opinion concerning “Flying Discs” to Brig. General George Schulgen, Chief of the Air Intelligence Requirements Division at the Pentagon.

Twining wrote: “The phenomena is something real and not visionary or fictitious...The reported operating characteristics such as extreme rates of climb, maneuverability (particularly in roll), and action which must be considered evasive when sighted or contacted by friendly aircraft and radar, lend belief to the possibility that some of the objects are controlled either manually, automatically or remotely.” He described the objects as metallic or light-reflecting, circular or elliptical with a flat bottom and domed top, and usually silent.

Twining stated that “due consideration must be given” to “the lack of physical evidence in the shape of crash recovered exhibits which would undeniably prove the existence of these objects.” He recommended that Army Air Forces assign “a priority, security classification and Code Name for a detailed study of this matter...”

In 1953, the Air Defense Command created the 4602d Air Intelligence Service Squadron (AISS) and assigned it to the official investigations of UFOs. The squadron was headquartered at Ent Air Force Base, CO and soon moved to Fort Belvoir, VA with field units throughout the country. All UFO reports were to go through the 4602d AISS prior to any transmission to Project Blue Book, a public relations project with no access to reports above the Secret level. The 4602d AISS dealt with more sensitive cases of national security concern requiring a higher classification. Thus, many UFO reports bypassed Blue Book altogether.

In 1954, Air Force Regulation 200-2 (“Unidentified Flying Objects Reporting”) stated that the Air Defense Command has “a direct interest in the facts pertaining to UFOBs” and will conduct all field investigations “to determine the identity of any UFOB.” It stated that the ADC will investigate the reports through the 4602d AISS, a highly mobile unit composed of “specialists trained for field collection and investigation of matters of air intelligence interest.” The document outlined collection responsibilities for this unit.

According to an Air Force Intelligence Letter (“Betz Memo”) of 13 Nov 1961, the 4602d had three peacetime functions:

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS (UFO) - A program for investigation of reliably reported unidentified flying objects within the United States.

PROJECT MOONDUST - A specialized aspect of the U.S. Air Force's over-all material of the exploitation program to locate, recover, and deliver descended foreign space vehicles.

OPERATION BLUE FLY – [A unit] to facilitate expeditious delivery to the Foreign Technological Division (FTD) of Moon Dust and other items of great technical intelligence interest.

The memo stated that all three functions involve “employment of qualified field intelligence personnel on a quick reaction basis to recover or perform field exploitation of unidentified flying objects, or known Soviet/Bloc aerospace vehicles, weapons systems, and/or residual components of such equipment.”

A classified 1969 Air Force document terminating Project Blue Book (“Bolender Memo”) made it clear that existing operations would continue to investigate UFOs even though the Air Force was closing Blue Book. The memo established that UFO reports affecting national security “are made in accordance with JANAP 146 or Air Force Manual 55-11, and are not part of the Blue Book system” and that “the defense function could be performed within the framework established for intelligence and surveillance operations.” It stated that “reports of UFOs which could affect national security would continue to be handled through the standard Air Force procedures designed for this purpose.”

As far as the public was concerned, the termination of Project Blue Book meant the end of the Air Force investigation into UFOs. The Air Force stated publicly two months after the issuance of the classified Bolender Memo that the continuation of Project Blue Book could not be justified on the grounds of national security, since no UFO has ever presented a threat to national security. The Air Force misinformed the public by not acknowledging its continuing, secret investigation of UFOs independent of Blue Book, and its very real national security concerns.

Ongoing efforts to retrieve fallen objects are described in a 1970 State Department telegram to its embassies and consulates around the world requesting that they post any “reports or sightings of entry into atmosphere or landing of ‘space debris.’” (Quotes around “space debris” are throughout.) The offices are instructed to follow leads “as expeditiously as possible” without informing the local government or making public comment. “Recovery of any material from such space debris would [be of] great scientific interest to USG,” the telegram states.

A 1973 Secret State Department Airgram confirms that "the designator 'MOONDUST' is used in cases involving the examination of non-US space objects and objects of unknown origin."

Beginning in 1989, Sergeant Clifford E. Stone, US Army ret., of New Mexico wrote to fourteen intelligence agencies for records on Project Moon Dust and Operation Blue Fly under the Freedom of Information Act. Many of the documents cited here were obtained through his efforts.

The responses from numerous agencies were inconsistent and evasive. In 1990, the U.S. Air

Force told Stone "we do not have any records responsive to your request." The U.S. Air Force Intelligence Service stated, "we have made a thorough search of our records and found none responsive to your request." Four months later, the Air Force reversed their initial position stating, "we have two records responsive to your request. However, they are exempt from disclosure because the information is properly classified."

The Defense Intelligence Agency stated that information pertaining to Project Moondust is classified and that the agency located no records on "Project Bluefly." Fifteen months later, the DIA acknowledged that the State Department had eight DIA documents, but that two were not releasable. (There are numerous references in Moon Dust documents to DIA participation in retrievals.)

In a 1991 letter, the Air Force told Stone, "we can neither confirm nor deny the existence or nonexistence of records responsive to your request regarding Projects or Operations known as Blue Fly, Moon Dust..."

On Stone's behalf, New Mexico Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici agreed to make inquiries to the Air Force about Project Moon Dust and Operation Blue Fly.

In response to a letter from Senator Bingaman in 1992, the Air Force told the Senator that, "there is no Project Moon Dust or Operation Blue Fly. These missions have never existed." When the Senator responded with documents challenging this, the Air Force "amended" its previous statement, acknowledging the existence and function of Moon Dust and Blue Fly with regards to UFOs.

In 1994, Senator Domenici requested eleven Air Force documents pertaining to Moon Dust and Blue Fly that were in State Department files but were denied Stone in 1991. (At that time, the Air Force had not been willing to "confirm nor deny the existence or non existence" of these documents.) The Air Force responded in December of 1994 that "the projects, as such no longer exist, nor do their files. Classified reports that existed, if any, presumably were destroyed."

Yet the Air Force informed a New Jersey citizen in 1998, in response to an independent request on Project Moon Dust and Operation Blue Fly, that "the information relating Project Moon Dust remain classified" and is being withheld. This contradicts the earlier statement by the same office that the files did not exist and were likely destroyed.

Why did the US Air Force state that the documents had been destroyed when they were requested by a US Senator? Why did it tell a second Senator that Moon Dust and Blue Fly never existed? Why the great concern about releasing information concerning fallen space debris collected decades ago?

In a letter dated February 28, 1994, New Mexico Congressman Joe Skeen told Stone that the "House Government Operations Committee has taken an interest in this matter...Congressional hearings may be held on this matter later this session." Skeen said he would also share Stone's report with the House Intelligence Committee.

In April 1997, the Air Force acknowledged to Stone that Operation Blue Fly's mission included "space objects and unidentified flying objects (UFOs) if any were reported available for recovery." It goes on to state that no Soviet Bloc planes were ever downed in the US, and "no UFOs were ever reported downed or recovered in the United States or anywhere else."

These statements are patently false. Air Force Intelligence files show that Operation Blue Fly was assigned to the intelligence exploitation of a Soviet-built Cuban helicopter in Florida.

More importantly with respect to UFOs, official documents released through FOIA directly contradict the 1997 Air Force statement. In 1965, a three-man team was sent to recover an object of unknown origin reported downed in Kecksburg, PA. (Witnesses state an object was recovered; the Air Force says nothing was found.) In August 1967, an object described as a satellite crashed and was recovered in the Sudan under Moon Dust. (The description on the DIA document released by the State Department does not fit that of a satellite.)

In 1968, Project Moon Dust recovered four unknown objects in Nepal. Also in 1968, a "dome-shaped object" with no identification marks was retrieved underwater off Cape Town, South Africa. The metal object had been subjected to extreme heat and showed no signs of corrosion. NASA determined it was made of "almost pure aluminum" and stated that the NASA analysis of the sample and photographs "does not otherwise provide a clue as to its origin or function although it is possible it is a space object of US origin."

In 1970, Moon Dust investigated a metal sphere that fell "with three loud explosions and then burned for five days" in South America. It had "ports" which had been melted closed. A May 1970 State Department document describes a fallen, unidentified object in Bolivia, depicted in the newspapers as metal and egg-shaped. The Department expresses a desire to assist the Bolivian Air Force in the investigation. "The general region had more than its share of reports of UFOs this past week," the document notes. It says that Panama and Paraguay checked with appropriate government agencies and "no direct correlation with known space objects that may have reentered the earth's atmosphere near May 6 can be made."

All the documents on the above events represent raw, unprocessed field intelligence data. The public, however, is not privy to the final determinations of these investigations. Where are the finalized intelligence products? Where are the recovered fragments?

Our government will not disclose what these objects were. In fact, the Air Force denies these events ever happened, even though official documents show otherwise. What is the purpose in keeping this information classified? The search for this information must pick up where Sgt. Stone, Senators Domenici and Bingaman, and Congressman Skeen left off.

The Kecksburg incident is an ideal focal point for further inquiry into Moon Dust and Blue Fly, since it is already well documented. The object fell on American soil. There were witnesses to the object on the ground and its removal by an Army vehicle. Countless others saw the Army cordon off the area, blocking access.

Project Blue Book files state that no object was found in Pennsylvania. They also acknowledge that no space debris entered our atmosphere that day and that “aluminum type” fragments were retrieved in Michigan. (Where are they now?). It is likely that Blue book was not informed about the retrieval of this object since it would have been classified higher than Secret.

In short, the documentation shows that the United States Air Force has continued to conduct a highly classified UFO investigation program in conjunction with other government agencies. Under this program, Project Moon Dust and Operation Blue Fly have recovered objects of unknown origin. We, as citizens, have been denied knowledge of what they were.

Physical evidence in the possession of the U.S. Government could shed light on the UFO question as would nothing else. The Kecksburg case also has the potential to generate more documentation on Project Moon Dust and Operation Blue Fly, which hold the key to other cases involving downed objects of unknown origin.

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