

A Different View of “Roswell — Anatomy of a Myth”

MICHAEL D. SWORDS

*Science Studies, Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, MI 49008*

Introduction

The article, “Roswell — Anatomy of a Myth,” is a literate, smooth, and emotive presentation of what Kent Jeffrey honestly believes to be true. Its craftsmanship is such that it can convince people that it deserves a wide audience (despite appearing previously in other venues). Kent is to be congratulated for presenting a strongly-worded case that nothing of ufological interest occurred at Roswell. Having said that, I must (as he already knows) disappoint my colleague and state that I disagree with about 90 percent of the analysis and conclusions that he presents.

Kent Jeffrey is a good fellow, and I have neither need nor intention of attacking him. I am a bit concerned, however, that the materials and analyses which will be presented below may be interpreted as such. They are not so intended. My concern grows from the emotive language which appears in and out, woven throughout Jeffrey’s article: “beyond all doubt,” “completely baseless,” “totally illogical,” “absolutely no doubt... I repeat, no doubt,” and “case closed.” It indicates the fervor with which he believes his position, and I am anxious that an attack on the position will be seen as unduly personal.

Having declared that concern, I believe that the readership should be made aware of my own biases and limitations. My interest in UFOs stretches back many years, and I am a member of the governing board of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS). I hold the belief that there are only about three, four or five persons on the planet who could be designated as ufological experts on Roswell (in its many facets), and that neither Jeffrey nor I are among them.

My interest in the Roswell case is about eight years old, and is based upon my experience at CUFOS with a small study group of persons (which included Kevin Randle, Donald Schmitt, and Mark Rodeghier), who analyzed many aspects of the case over several years. My qualifications for this article, such as they are, include first this case familiarity, secondly my membership in the group of five researchers who watched the videotaped hypnosis sessions of Jesse Marcel, Jr., which Jeffrey mentions in his article, and, thirdly (and with an unfortunate lack of humility) I am a — if not the — leading expert on the

early Air Force documents which Jeffrey cites as the critical evidence that turned him around.

I am certainly willing to bow to other “authority” on this latter, but I have spent the last eight years (not uncoincidentally with my interest in the Roswell case) looking into the document exchanges between Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and the Pentagon on ufological matters. Hopefully, these studies will shed some light on this affair.

The Air Force Documents Cited

A few preliminary remarks — when the modern era of ufology began in the summer of 1947, it was the Directorate of Intelligence of the Army Air Force (soon to become the fully-independent Air Force), which was centrally concerned. This office is in the Pentagon, and is a multi-branching organization with many duties. The main office for collecting the early UFO information was a branch called AFOIR-CO (Air Force Office of Intelligence Requirements — Collections). An officer, Lt. Col. George Garrett was assigned to the task. Other Pentagon offices were concerned with the impact these saucer reports might be having, or might conceivably have in the future. Rather rapidly, a concern grew about the Soviet Union’s role in this, either as a causal agent or as a potential user of the phenomenon for psychological warfare. Some of the offices concerned in this way were AFOAI-DA (Air Force Office of Air Intelligence — Defensive Air), AFOAI-AE (Air Force Office of Air Intelligence — Air Estimates), and AFOPW (Air Force Office of Psychological Warfare).

Very early in the summer 1947 UFO wave, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base was not particularly involved, but became more and more so as the summer wore on and turned to September. No center for UFO information was created within Wright-Patterson’s Intelligence Division, so-called “T-2,” until about September of 1947 when the Pentagon began transferring its flying disk files to an intelligence engineer named Alfred C. Loedding. Loedding, with a few colleagues, became the Air Force focus for the many reports from ground and air witnesses in the fall and winter of 1947, and that group was formally titled “Project Sign” in early 1948. Then began about one year of fairly intense UFO report analysis at T-2, which culminated in a great clash of viewpoints between Project Sign and elements in the Pentagon by the fall of 1948. All this plays in our story, as I hope I can make clear in the small amount of space which I can allot such a rich historical tale (FBI 1947; Gross, 1988; Swords, 1991, 1996, 1997, n.d.; USAF 1947-9).

I believe that taking the documents to which Jeffrey refers in their proper temporal order is best. This will allow a sorely needed historical context and sequence.

First, the September 23, 1947, letter of Gen. Nathan Twining (Twining, 1947) — this is the well-known “Twining letter” to the Pentagon that was written to formally request the setting up of a UFO-information-gathering pro-

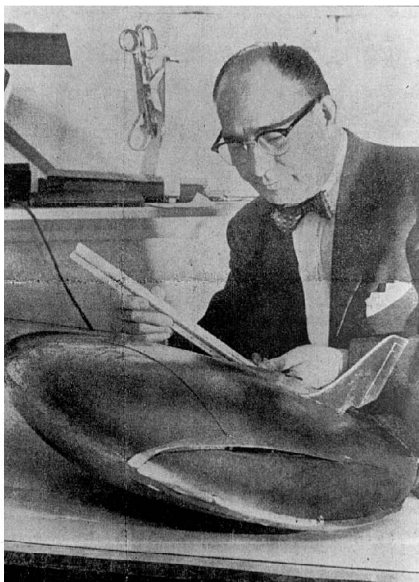


Fig. 1. Alfred C. Loedding, Chief Civilian Investigator USAF Project SIGN. (Courtesy Loedding Family)

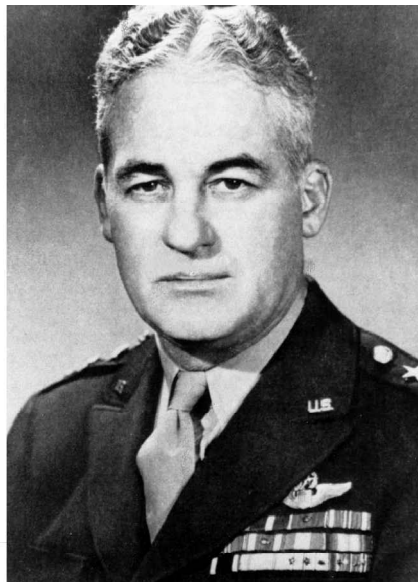


Fig. 2. Gen. Nathan Twining, Commander Air Material Command. (USAF)

ject at T-2. This was later done, as mentioned above, and became Project Sign. This letter has a history, as do all these documents, and that history precisely determines their contents, who writes them, and for what purpose. None of these formal military letters is in any sense sloppy, general chatting between old friends—in this case in particular.

The origin of the Twining letter dates back to Lt. Colonel Garrett in July 1947, in the Pentagon. He and the FBI had been put on high alert for information about the flying disks in early July, and now, about two weeks later, the pressure was suddenly absent...., entirely. This odd occurrence, which has been nicknamed “the silence from Topside,” led Garrett and his FBI liaison, S. W. Reynolds, to conclude that not only “the high brass appeared to be totally unconcerned,” but that “there were objects seen which somebody in the government knows all about.” (FBI, 1947)

Garrett then determined to take his best sixteen (later he added two more) cases, extract their common characteristics, and make an “estimate of the situation” (military jargon for the best guess intelligence analysis, given the knowledge available to the author). He and Reynolds naturally thought that they were wasting their time chasing after a U.S. hi-tech aircraft or missile, and that by sending this descriptive estimate around to Army, Air Force, and Navy Research and Development, someone would tell them that “yes, these are ours, and you boys can quit.” They, however, received no such replies. The flying disks were not early “black projects.” As a last gasp, and still totally

puzzled by the silence at the extreme high levels of the Pentagon, the early estimate was sent to Wright-Patterson for Twining to get his technical experts to respond. It is this request from Garrett in AFOIR-CO that the Twining letter responds to.

The purposes of the September 23 letter are two:

1. To inform Colonel Garrett, and through him the FBI, that Wright-Patterson believes that the flying disks are real but not a product of base research and development technologies; and
2. To suggest to the Assistant Director of Intelligence, Brig. Gen. George Schulgen, that a formal project for collecting and analyzing UFO reports be set up at the base (a suggestion already informally agreed to more than two weeks earlier when Garrett began shipping his files to Loedding at Dayton).

The letter was written for Twining by Wright-Patterson's Director of T-2 (Intelligence Division), Col. Howard (Mack) McCoy. McCoy had reviewed Garrett's estimate with several department chiefs, and the Twining letter was their response. The response essentially repeats the previous information and adds a little of its own (a good time-honored military procedure). The letter was classified secret.

For Jeffrey, the critical phrase in this letter states, "...the lack of physical evidence in the shape of crash-recovered exhibits which would undeniably prove the existence of these objects." This bothers him greatly regarding the reality of the Roswell event, and (in some modes of looking at the letter) I suppose that he is entitled to be bothered. Let us, however, look again at the function of this piece of correspondence.

Colonel McCoy is creating a letter for the purpose of answering lower offices in the Pentagon and the FBI about whether they should quit being interested in fielding UFO reports. The answer to that is clearly, "No, you should not." The letter is classified secret. By rule, no mention of anything relating to any top secret project (*e.g.* a crashed extraterrestrial spacecraft) may occur in such correspondence. Mack McCoy was an excellent intelligence officer and would have certainly been on guard against anything like that. There was no need for Garrett or the FBI to know of any (alleged) crashed disk if such had occurred in order to do their jobs. And, there is at least a plausible argument that McCoy himself had no need to know (and therefore, if ignorant, had no opportunity to even slip up and mention such a highly classified thing in a lower-security document).

The latter plausibility scenario (which by the way is not even necessary to explain the absence of crashed UFO references, as stated above) goes as follows: A crash occurs, and it is immediately obvious that this is a *major* secrecy issue. It is also obvious that this is a *laboratory* and *technology* issue. The materials are flown to our major secret laboratory and technology areas. If this is at Wright-Patterson, then this material goes to some very high security lab at



Fig. 3. Colonel Howard McCoy, Chief of Intelligence AMC-T-2. (Courtesy, Mrs. H.M. McCoy)



Fig. 4. Wright-Patterson AFB, the complex of organizations located at Dayton, Ohio. Wright Field, the top secret engineering research facility is located at the triangular field on the left. Patterson Field, the actual air force base is separated by a civilian highway and is on the right. Howard McCoy's Intelligence Division was located right of center in the picture on Patterson Field. (USAF)

T-3, Engineering and Technology Division, *not* to T-2 and Colonel McCoy. Would they have let Mack in on it just because he was a good patriot and soldier, and one of the “good old boys circle” at the base? Maybe. Maybe not. How stifflingly serious do you think the high brass would have been with something like this in their hands? Whether he knew or whether he did not, Mack McCoy will *not* mention this in any secret correspondence, nor any letter with the purposes previously stated. The possible objection, that one cannot believe Colonel McCoy and Twining would *lie* in such a letter, involves a level of naiveté that beggars the imagination, and is a position which, I believe, Jeffrey does not hold.

Jeffrey’s analysis of the Twining letter breaks down first because of the omission of placing it into the known historical context of the intelligence correspondence, the structure of the base divisions, and the protocols of military secrecy.

Secondly, there are the March 1948 minutes of the USAF Scientific Advisory Board. This is a document which was received *via* the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) by UFO researcher William LaParl. It is the minutes of the USAF-SAB conference of March 17 and 18 at which matters of interest to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base’s Air Matériel Command (AMC) were discussed. At one point in the meeting, Colonel McCoy is speaking about the various intelligence operations at AMC’s T-2, and says this about his new UFO project:

We have a new project — Project Sign — which may surprise you as a development from the so-called mass hysteria of the past summer when we had all the unidentified flying objects or discs. This can not be laughed off. We have over 300 reports which have not been publicized in the papers from very competent personnel, in many instances — men as capable as Dr. K. D. Wood and practically all Air Force, Airline people with broad experience. We are running down every report. I can’t even tell you how much we would give to have one of those crash in an area so that we could recover whatever they are. (USAF-SAB 1948)

Once again, McCoy has made a similar statement to the one that he made in the Twining memo, with a similar effect upon Jeffrey (and others who read the paragraph in its isolation). LaParl passed this document on to Jeffrey in the spring of 1996 with understandable concern. Jeffrey says that it was “for me, the beginning of the end for the Roswell UFO case.” Is this the way the rest of us should view it?

As the alert reader probably guesses, this document’s relevance is very similar to that of the Twining letter. It is a report, apparently originally marked secret, about general AMC technical research and intelligence matters to a group of about 39 men who constituted the Scientific Advisory Board. The major item on the agenda is AMC’s desire to add ten scientists at reasonably high salaries to establish an Applied Research Section. AMC is trying to impress the USAF-SAB with what they are doing at the base in hopes of a successful



Fig. 5 USAF-SAB. The United States Air Force's Scientific Advisory Board in the late 1940's. Theodore von Karman is at the head of the table. At the near left front is George Valley of MIT, the chief advisor on UFO's in the relevant period. (USAF)

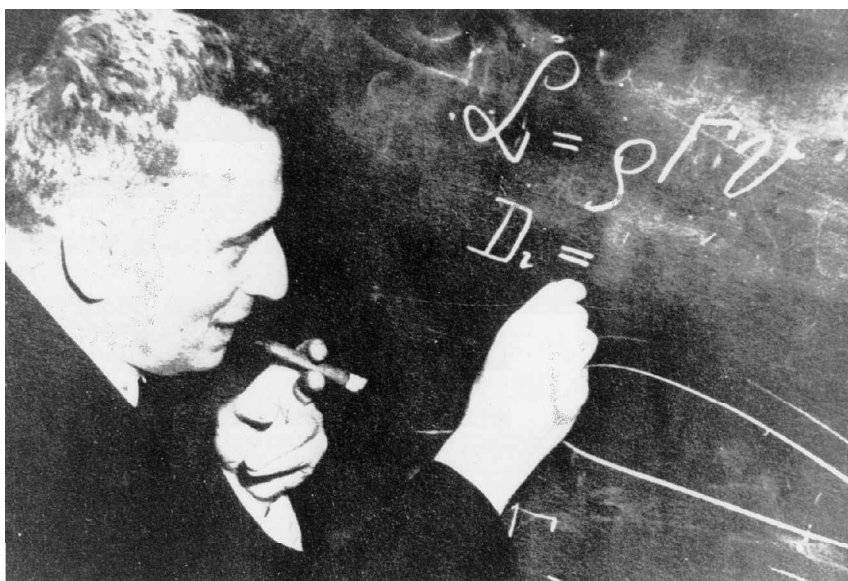


Fig. 6. Theodore von Karman, Professor of Aeronautics at Cal Tech in the late 40's. (USAF)

lobby for these positions and this section with the high levels of Air Force command. This sales job works, and SAB chairman Theodore von Karman writes to the USAF Director of Research and Development in April of 1948 agreeing with AMC (with some organizational changes) and recommending the new section and the ten new positions. This was what was deemed important about the March meeting. With the exception of a brief mention of a

Scientific Liaison Group who would connect with intelligence activities, the informational material of Colonel McCoy is not even alluded to (von Karman 1948).

Though others may choose to read other things into this affair, it is my view that one should view the document as what it seems to be: A transcript of a set of AMC comments to an influential board around a subject that had essentially nothing to do with UFOs. McCoy's part was a general and very abbreviated rundown, almost "newsy" in its attitude, about T-2 intelligence projects. The Project mentioned, Sign, had (as we have seen) nothing to do with Roswell, and therefore required no such mention in its description. McCoy, as described earlier, could well have had no need to know, and, even if he did, would not discuss it in a meeting which contained persons who also had no need to know. The transcript as "secret" would not contain "top secret" materials.

William LaParl realized this, and passed such a comment on to Jeffrey and others in his spring 1996 correspondence. LaParl wondered if this could mean that McCoy's remark was a "throw-out," deliberately calculated to flag the top secrecy of the crashed disk project as being a discussion no-no. He wondered also if some speculators would resort to a "Full California" theory — wherein rampant paranoia gets one to assert that everyone in the room knows the secret and are winking and smirking at one another as McCoy reads the bogus disinformation statement. (LaParl 1996).

My view is far short of Full California. As stated earlier, the main Roswell hypothesis of the persons that I regard as case experts includes a very select and secret group of people which do not include many rank-and-file intelligence people, or even most higher officers and scientists. In 1954, Dwight Eisenhower created an ultrasecret committee of about 50 persons (including the "staff") to assess the Soviet Union's offensive nuclear strike capability. He did not even want his *National Security Council* to be in on it! And so, they did their work outside all the normal channels of government (and intelligence) organization, and reported only to Eisenhower. This might be a model for similar such "outside the lines" committees.

But would the Air Force not just utilize its S.A.B. for this purpose, and so the Full California ridiculousness would really have been present for McCoy's talk? Well, suit yourself. We are in the realm of wild guessing. My own wild guess is, "No. The S.A.B. is not appropriate." Although all the men on the S.A.B. were intelligent, not all of them were particularly relevant to a crashed-disk research project. The S.A.B. subcommittees were "aircraft," "fuels," "missiles," "electronics," "weather and upper air," "explosives and armament," and "aero-medicine." A scattering of these people could have been deemed appropriate; not all. Also, it was not only the Air Force that was involved in the Roswell event. Other Pentagon elements would, no doubt, have wanted a piece of the action.

Apparently, not every S.A.B. member had top secret clearance at the time (Baldes, Gamow), although it stands to reason that something unusual must

have been going on there to allow them to be on the Board at all. The scenario viewed by persons, such as myself and Mark Rodeghier, is that we have a person (McCoy) who probably did not know about Roswell, speaking to a bunch of persons, at least some if not the majority of whom did not know, in a conference on a different subject and intent, and classified secret rather than the required top secret. Any fragment of that array of points would be sufficient to obviate comments by McCoy relevant to Roswell.

Let us address the so-called McCoy letter of November 8. In this case, the document is one further step removed from Roswell relevancy, as it was not even written by Colonel McCoy but by the project team of Project Sign in response to a direct letter from the Pentagon requesting Sign’s views on UFOs. It, therefore, is not even McCoy from whom we are hearing in this instance. But to make it clear what is going on, we need to unravel McCoy’s relationship to Project Sign, and Sign’s relationship to the Pentagon in the summer and fall of 1948.

As chief of T-2, Colonel McCoy was the appropriate signatory of important letters of response going to the Pentagon, although the specific responses originated beneath him in the T-2 structure. The most important function under McCoy’s leadership was the Intelligence Analysis Division, headed by Col. William Clingerman, also a fine young officer and an engineer. His division’s duty was to assess the technical capabilities of potential enemies, vis-à-vis air power and missiles. He had even personally investigated at least one major UFO case in the summer of 1947 (Harmon Field, Newfoundland).

Under Clingerman’s division were two sections: Analysis and Operations.



Fig. 7. Colonel William Clingerman, Chief of the Intelligence Analysis Division Under Howard McCoy. (Courtesy of the Clingerman Family)

Wright-Patterson, like all the services, had numerous alphabet-soup designators: MCI (Air Material Command Intelligence, under McCoy); MCIA (MCI Analysis, under Clingerman); MCIAT (MCI Analysis Technical, a section under Clingerman), and so on. An MCIAT designator on the letter of November 8, 1948, tells us that someone in the Analysis Section office wrote it, in this particular instance Albert B. Deyarmond (A.B.D.). Deyarmond was also an engineer and a friend and World War II field colleague of McCoy. He retired from active duty at the end of the war, but stayed on as a civilian intelligence analyst in T-2, often working directly for Clingerman. He was assigned to help Project Sign, went on many investigations (especially the Chiles-Whitcomb case), and co-authored the Project Sign final report in late 1948.

Deyarmond wrote this letter at the behest of the Project Sign team, which was a special project (MCIAXO-3) underneath the Special Projects branch (MCIAXO) of the analysis section. The Sign team was primarily composed of Capt. Robert R. Sneider (Chief); civilian engineers Deyarmond, Alfred Loedding (on loan from T-3), and Lawrence Truettner (on loan from the guided missiles branch of MCIAT); Lt. Howard W. Smith; George W. Towles; drop-in work by MCIAXO Chief Maj. Raymond A. Llewellyn; and other personnel, later including John (Red) Honaker of Clingerman's office.

These people, or some important majority of them, composed this letter. It was then Clingerman's and McCoy's decision whether or not to send it up. (This exact process, by the way, would also have occurred with the famous Estimate of the Situation document, which concluded that flying disks were extraterrestrial. Written a month or so earlier, it had caused consternation at high levels in the Pentagon, the same high levels to which this current letter was sent.) The letter, therefore, was the product of the knowledge and interests of Sneider, Loedding, Truettner, and Deyarmond (who are also the probable authors of the Estimate), and was, at the least, unobjected to by Clingerman and McCoy.

The text of Deyarmond's letter is sort of a mini-Estimate itself, as well as a statement of admission that the problem was still confusing and unsolved. "McCoy" (Deyarmond) began the letter by stating what they had been doing at Wright-Patterson to solve the flying-disk mystery. A study of approximately 180 incidents was made (the exact number was 177). The UFOs broke down into four categories (disks, torpedoes, spheres, and balls of light). Some of these objects were identified mundanely, others not. A prominent astrophysicist (J. Allen Hynek) was employed as a consultant. (He later contributed a thick appendix, Ohio State University Research Foundation Project No. 364, for the Project Sign final report.)

A study of possible psychological problems was to be made at the Aero-Medical Lab in T-3 by Dr. Paul Fitts. (This would also be included in the final project report.) Dr. Irving Langmuir, of General Electric and the USAF Science Advisory Board, was to be consulted for expert knowledge, as he had been once before. (Langmuir's earlier advice apparently amounted to nothing

more than a cursory look at and dismissal of the famous Rhodes photos taken in Phoenix in July 1947.) The second consultancy apparently never officially took place, but the 177 cases were sent on microfilm to another Advisory Board member, Dr. George Valley, who later wrote an appendix for the Sign/Grudge report. This section of the McCoy letter was a preemptory defense of the Project and how thorough it had been.

The letter then began to make its point that flying disks were real, might be a major mystery, and were worth handling in a serious manner. The objects were not of domestic origin (that is, nobody claimed that we had anything like them), but they appeared to be real flying objects. Esoteric aeronautical engineering theory (there were pages in Sign report that referred to the "Prandtl theory of lift" for a wingless or nearly wingless body) indicated that such odd shapes could be expected to fly, especially if the power plants were more powerful than contemporary ones. The extraterrestrial hypothesis "has not been ignored." In fact, it was obviously taken quite seriously, even to the extent of correlating UFO incidents with the planetary approaches of Mercury, Venus, and Mars, whereupon some relationship seemed to be found. The works of Charles Fort were mentioned to give further historical basis for a real mystery.

Tangible evidence for the extraterrestrial hypothesis was lacking. There was "no conclusive proof" that UFOs were real aircraft. No physical evidence "such as that which would result from a crash" was on hand. With these phrases the Wright-Patterson project backed off from any firm conclusion, while still suggesting that there was interesting work to be done. They suggested silence on unidentified cases and only vague public-relations statements to the press, while continuing with a serious investigation behind the scenes. The end of the letter promised the nearly complete Sign report to show up soon. The document was marked secret.

Placed in a proper historical context, this letter seems to make good sense. This was a Project Sign document, with Project Sign concerns, that went to the Pentagon at a critical moment for the project. Sign was given the specific task of conducting an intelligence analysis of the flying-disk incidents, and, when reasonably confident that it had something to say, writing an "Estimate of the Situation" on the nature and potential seriousness of any enemy threat involved. Inspired by an accumulation of odd reports that seemed generally valid to them, and centered on the famous Chiles-Whitted case that sent them into a frenzy, the main project members felt it reasonable to transmit to USAF headquarters an Estimate concluding that the flying disks were extraterrestrial. This happened in either late September or early October of 1948.

Capt. Edward Ruppelt, who headed the project from 1951 to 1953, said that the document went all the way to the chief of staff's office (Gen. Hoyt Vandenburg) before it was batted back down as unacceptable. I am assuming that during the month between the sending of the Estimate and the sending of this letter, the batting has occurred, and that this letter was Wright-Patterson's



Fig. 8. General Hoyt Vandenburg, USAF Chief of Staff.

Project Sign response. If this is true in any rough sense, then a possible time line of events can be constructed as follows:

1. July 25, 1948, and afterward. The Chiles-Whitted flying-fuselage case took place and was intensely investigated by the Sign team. The Prandtl theory of lift was invoked to rationalize the object's ability to fly. Nuclear-propulsion power plants were postulated as a motive force well beyond contemporary human capability. The conclusion: extraterrestrial spacecraft.
2. August and September 1948. Other sightings from Sign and pre-Sign history were added to the Chiles-Whitted analysis to produce, or so it seemed to Sign personnel, a reasonable, logical conclusion: The unusual performance and shape characteristics of many UFO reports were best — and perhaps only — explained by extraterrestrial vehicles. An analysis of unexplained incidents seemed to indicate a relationship between UFO sightings and the close approaches of inner-solar-system planets. This results in a request to the Pentagon to alert all operatives and other services to be ready for a possible rise in sightings in mid-October.
3. Late September or early October. Sneider completed the Estimate with the editorial approval of Loedding, Deyarmond, and Truettner. Clingerman and McCoy approved it, and it was sent to Gen. Charles Cabell's USAF Directorate of Intelligence office.
4. October 1948. The Pentagon went into an uproar about what to do about this. Cabell was new on the job, and found that he had a split house in terms of advisers. The "collections" side of Intelligence Requirements



Fig. 9. General Charles Cabell, Chief of Intelligence Under Hoyt Vandenburg. (USAF)

(AFOIR-CO) in the persons of Col. Robert Taylor and Lt. Col. George Garrett, were probably at least open-minded if not all the way sympathetic. The “intelligence analysis” side (AFOAI-DA), especially the Defense Analysis office of Maj. Aaron (“Jerry”) Boggs, and the Deputy Director of Estimates, Col. E. H. Porter, were probably very hostile. The recently arrived Director of Research and Development, Gen. Donald Putt, was interested and insisted on an open mind. There were probably representatives of every possible school of thought among the other directorate big wheels (Col. J. M. Schweizer, Gen. E. Moore, Col. F. P. Sturdivant — the main people in Cabell’s office). The size of the issue, the newness of the Director of Intelligence, and the diversity of the schools of thought probably required that this hot potato be passed all the way to the Chief of Staff, Vandenburg. We do not know who Vandenburg consulted, nor why the decision was made as it was, but the Estimate was sent cascading back down to Wright-Patterson as unacceptable.

Throughout October the debate at the Pentagon must have been intense, because it resulted not in a simple slap-down of the extraterrestrial hypothesis and a clear message to take all such conclusions out of any final project report, but it also resolved that the flying disks were products of technology. This was expressed in a letter from Director of Intelligence Cabell to the Commanding General of Air Matériel Command (but really intended for Project Sign) on

November 3, 1948. The McCoy letter we are currently analyzing was a response to this.

The November 3 Cabell letter essentially asked Sign for another Estimate. It reminded Sign personnel why the project was established. It agreed that it “appears inescapable that some type of flying object has been observed.” It admitted that headquarters could not identify it. It said that efforts must be increased until conclusive evidence is obtained. National defense was at stake. Countermeasures must be considered. Also, what to say or not to say to the public was an issue. The press was getting impatient and might take matters into its own hands if no better information was forthcoming. (Soon after, Sidney Shallet of the *Saturday Evening Post* got approval through Secretary of Defense, Forrestal, to visit the project and write a major UFO article. This disturbed Cabell and the USAF.) AMC was required to respond to all of this promptly. Five days later, McCoy (that is, Deyarmond and Project Sign) replied.

“McCoy’s” letter is aimed exactly at the Cabell requests. It gave Sign’s now tentative (and non-extraterrestrial) conclusions. Flying disks were real. But we can not be sure exactly what they are. In saying this, Project Sign reacted in classic military style: They echoed back exactly what the boss (Cabell) just told them.

The letter then went further. They just had their knuckles rapped, so they defended themselves. We have worked very hard on many cases, they said. Not only have we handled all this work personally and professionally, but we have checked with all sorts of experts (General Mills, Cambridge Labs, Hynek, our own engineers) and we are still going after more (Aero-Med/Fitts, Langmuir). The message was: We have done our job well.

Then they got even bolder. They refused to give up on the extraterrestrial hypothesis. In a carefully worded paragraph, they floated the idea back into the Pentagon maelstrom. They admitted that “tangible evidence” to support this was completely lacking. *Tangible* evidence — real physical stuff that you could feel and drag into the lab — remained absent. And, at the Project, that was exactly correct as far as any of them knew. They added the tidbit on Charles Fort to reinforce how really odd the phenomena were and how insufficient the hypothesis of modern earth-created technology seemed to be. Other hints were dropped: the planetary approach/UFO incident pattern, and the insufficiency of contemporary power plants to do the flying as described. The Sign boys were almost screaming “extraterrestrial” between the lines.

The letter ended with a few summary lines and a suggestion that the public should not be told much about the unexplained cases. In the summary was a phrase that some readers believe is extremely significant, but I do not. Deyarmond wrote that no physical evidence “such as that which would result from a crash” existed.

Does this negate Roswell?

Following this exchange of letters between the Pentagon and Project Sign, neither party let the matter rest there.

Project Sign personnel were ordered to Washington for a meeting with Pentagon personnel on November 12, 1948. This meeting, held at the National Bureau of Standards, must have been extremely confrontational. Capt. Robert Sneider, chief of Project Sign and probable author of the Estimate, and Maj. Jerry Boggs, leading Pentagon author of anti-UFO viewpoints, were there to anchor both ends of the belief spectrum.

After this meeting, both sides were apparently dissatisfied, and neither backed off. Sign was ordered to send all its UFO incident summaries to the Pentagon, and to continue sending new cases as they were processed. The project was also ordered to send the case microfilms to the USAF Scientific Advisory Board to be forwarded to Valley for his assessment. The incident summaries went initially to Garrett of AFOIR-CO, but were picked up by Boggs in AFOAI-DA. Boggs and the anti-UFO element of the Pentagon were checking up on Wright-Patterson, and wished to give a quite different opinion than the one issuing from Project Sign.

A little less than one month later, that opinion appeared as Air Intelligence Report No. 100-203-72, *Analysis of Flying Object Incidents in the U.S.* (Air Intelligence Division Study No. 203, December 10, 1948), reprinted in *MUFON UFO Journal*, July 1985. It was authorized by both the USAF and the Office of Naval Intelligence. Boggs was probably the author. It, like the Estimate, was classified top secret. The report admitted that the objects might be real, but if so, suggested that the source was Nazi or Soviet.

On the other side, Sign was not ready to fold up in the face of Pentagon pressure. They had received an assessment by RAND on the characteristics to be expected in earth-orbiting spaceships, plus a sympathetic assessment on the possibilities of extraterrestrial intelligence by Valley. Loedding took his study (he always referred to himself as the “civilian head of Project Sign”) to a prominent American scientist (probably Langmuir), and was rebuffed. “Shortly thereafter I was informed that my stock in Washington had hit an all-time low,” said Loedding in the *Trenton (N.J.) Times*, Oct. 10, 1954.

Still, the Sign project persisted. The group had been excited by the famous Fargo, North Dakota, “dogfight” case on October 1, 1948, involving national guard pilot, George Gorman. Not only did they view this case as unsolved and extremely peculiar, but they looked into the possibility that Gorman’s plane was irradiated during the incident. Geiger counter readings were ambiguous. The point was, however, that they were attempting to verify their extraterrestrial nuclear-power-plant hypothesis.

This interest continued until the end of the Project Sign team. The last gasp probably occurred when Truettner met with Colonel Wassell, the Air Force liaison to Nuclear Engine Propulsion Aircraft (NEPA) Project at Oak Ridge. Truettner, through McCoy, informed the Pentagon on February 9, 1949, that Wassell felt that atomic power for the UFO incidents was “highly

improbable.” Whether this was a magic moment or not, very shortly afterwards every prominent Project Sign member was reassigned, even McCoy and Clingerman. The civilian engineers stayed in T-2 (they were still there when Ruppelt arrived in 1951), but were removed from the UFO business. The two lowest ranks in the project were left, and these too were soon replaced by individuals of even greater hostility to flying disk reality than inhabited the Pentagon. By the summer of 1949 it was obvious which side had won the UFO war.

It is my opinion that, though interesting, the McCoy letter had nothing to do with the Roswell incident, although it is understandable that people who have not studied the context from which the letter arises might think that it does. The November 8 letter was a required response to General Cabell’s November 3 letter. It was a response from Project Sign (Sneider, Loedding, Deyarmond, and Truettner). These four individuals believed that flying disks were extraterrestrial, but they knew nothing of Roswell. All of Project Sign’s records and all of Project Sign’s behaviors indicate that the project did not know about Roswell (other than the newspaper reports and the cover story). When “McCoy” wrote that they had no tangible evidence, such as a crash, this was:

1. The most natural thing in the world for the project to state, especially for Deyarmond, who spent a lot of time in Europe picking up crashed German airplanes; and
2. True for Deyarmond, Loedding, Truettner, and Sneider — they had no knowledge of this sort.

So the only relevant question is this: Is it odd that Project Sign was not told about or involved with Roswell?

I do not think it odd at all. Project Sign was set up to conduct, as traditionally as possible, T-2 intelligence gathering and analysis of reported incidents of U.S. (and other) airspace violations. This assignment was ridiculous if they were also sitting on top of a real saucer in AMC storage where they could go over and visit it regularly. Therefore, this project could not have known of any Roswell evidence.

So, why was it set up at all? If there was no Roswell incident, the Air Force needed an office to do its job of gathering and analyzing intelligence UFO intelligence. If there was a Roswell incident and it was kept ultrasecret, the Air Force still needed the same office to do its job; for if it completely ignored the UFO phenomenon, everyone (both inside and outside the military) would have demanded to know what was going on.

I believe, in fact, that the higher-ups made this exact mistake of disinterest, briefly in mid-August 1947, when the FBI and Garrett were wondering why there was a “silence from topside” and why no big wheels were pressing for action on the flying-disk problem. (“Flying Disks,” memorandum from E. G. Fitch to D. M. Ladd, FBI, Aug. 19, 1947). The upper echelon corrected this error in September by ordering Wright Patterson to be vigilant about this problem, and by setting Project Sign in motion. Everything that I have read in the

available Sign and Pentagon documents seems consistent with a technological problem that was taken seriously, with certain top-secret facts known only to a *very* few individuals at high levels and in specific locations.

It is also possible that puzzled technical experts unable to unravel the functions of a crashed alien device might have wanted an energetic, if naive, group of intelligence gatherers who might get lucky with some details that would help unlock the technological mysteries. These experts would be privy to the project’s findings, but the project might not even be aware of their research.

I have taken a lot of Journal space in dealing with these documents, but a real analysis of history requires it. It is the temptation of simplicity, and even superficiality, which gets us into these sorts of messes. Worms are far easier let out of cans than coaxed back in. And, as Jeffrey has stated in his article, these documents are the origins and core of his position. If Roswell did or did not happen (as a spectacular non-mundane event) is still, of course, open to be debated. But my studies say to me that these documents have little or nothing to do with it.

The Jesse Marcel, Jr., Videotapes

Jeffrey says that this effort to hypnotize Jesse Marcel, Jr., was his last desperate grasp to save Roswell in his mind. I believe that. As such, it is not very important since the issue was essentially over before this part of the game began. Still, a few points are worth making.

I was one of a few researchers to whom Jeffrey sent the tapes for review and comment. None of the four of us (Mark Rodeghier, Rob Swiatek, Bob Durant, nor myself) agree with his impressions. What we saw and heard was a very reluctant hypnotic subject finally getting a little relaxed and beginning to think back to an event which had made a big impression on him. Jeffrey came away from the sessions disappointed that Jesse, Jr. did not describe some sorts of fancy space technologies in bits and pieces, although such disappointment is odd — Jesse, Jr. is thoroughly on record as to the kinds of material he saw in his parents’ home, and gave a precisely consistent description on this occasion as well. So, Jeffrey should have known well beforehand what was going to be said. The rest of us were encouraged by the consistency of Marcel’s story, both in its details and natural flow. The debris materials were visualized and sketched, and Marcel (a person who was a craft hobbyist and familiar with many craft materials) said several things of interest:

1. The foil-like materials were very thin and light, but they seemed firm, and were not crinkled in any way (not one of the pieces showed marks or folds such as one would expect with aluminum foil).
2. The foil-like materials were just that. He remembers them as not being “complex,” with “backing” or any such additional substance.



Fig. 10. Major Jesse Marcel, Sr., the Chief Intelligence Officer at the Roswell Army Air Force Base in 1947. Marcel claims that he was ordered to pose with bogus balloon debris so that the incident would become a laughingstock. (USAF)



Fig. 11. Major Jesse Marcel, Sr.

3. The small stick-like “beam” or member, which had the symbols on it, was as light as balsa wood, but *was not* balsa wood. It was like a very lightweight metal.
4. The dark glassy or plastic-like material was closest to Bakelite of anything he knew, but *was not* Bakelite.

To Jeffrey these statements mean that the debris *was* backed aluminum foil, *was* balsa wood, and *was* Bakelite. Jesse Marcel, Jr., says absolutely “no” to all of that. The reader will of course decide for himself on whatever decision-making grounds he may choose. In ufology, it is our normal practice not to run roughshod over the details of witness testimony. If we treated other reporters’ comments the way these of Marcel are being treated, no case would stand (nor any report about anything, UFO or no). I think that the situation calls for a little humility and moderation of conclusion at the minimum.

One could go much further into this “balloon and reflector” business, as has been done. *Several* other persons have spoken of the debris, yet Jeffrey’s assault seems to proceed as if the Marcells, Sr. and Jr., were all that mattered.

This is a whole new complexity which would call for another article. It will have to suffice at this time to mention just one related element: To accept Jeffrey’s (and the Air Force’s) views that this was balloon technology, we are being asked to seriously consider that two quite intelligent people (Jesse Marcel, Sr., and Roswell Base Commander Butch Blanchard) were so uninformed



Fig. 12. Colonel William H. Blanchard, Commander of Roswell Army Air Force Base and the 509th (nuclear) Bomb Group. Blanchard ordered the base’s public information officer to compose a newspaper release saying that they had captured a flying disk on a ranch in the locality. (USAF).

and/or undisciplined and lacking in practical perspective, that they not only could not recognize balloon and radar technology but thought that it was so weird that it was from a flying saucer. I find this line of thought challenging enough that I think it deserves a better defense than that which Jeffrey gives it to make it even remotely entertaining.

The Roswell scenario does not have a whole craft crash at the Brazel ranch which Marcel visited to pick up his debris. It has the ranch as a “debris field” of what might be the external casing of a disk with the core ending up elsewhere, north of Roswell but much closer to town than the ranch. Several lines of testimony have led to this, which are not mentioned in Jeffrey’s article. This is of course his choice. In my view it is a choice which misleads. I cannot write an entire book on the case here. The reader is referred to the writings of Kevin Randle and Donald Schmitt (Randle & Schmitt, 1991, 1994; Randle, 1997).

IV. Conclusion

Jeffrey’s article, brief in contrast to the complexity of this case, would require a far longer response than I can give it. A whole issue of meddling with witness testimony (in the cases of Colonel DuBose and Major Marcel, as well as some others not mentioned) would take up a new chapter. By the way, Jeffrey has not done any of this, but he does trust certain UFO researchers, who, in my opinion, have. Jeffrey is an honest person, let me be clear about that (Randle, 1997).

I do beg to differ with him regarding a few of the attitudes which run through the paper, however. Roswell is like a large, many-branched tree (and many-rooted as well). It has grown into somewhat of a monster, and cannot be said to be taken down by pruning here and there at branches. First, the document argument is not climactic (and I believe that it is not even relevant), then cutting or trimming a branch does little to the entire tree. In my opinion, the trimming attempted here has not clipped off much of anything.

Secondly, there is a theme running through the piece which should be a bit disturbing to the *Journal* readership. I would class it as a form of “unscientificity.” It expresses itself here and there as an honoring of common sense, even once specifically being cited as superior to abstract or esoteric theory of an academic disciplinary viewpoint — well, maybe. The tenor of the piece verges strongly on the view of this superior common sense as being “the view which makes sense to me;” a position of subjectivity which perhaps explains the powerfully emotive “case closed,” “totally illogical” *etc.* language which punctuates the exposition.

Everyone is allowed his common sense opinion in this country. Conclusions based on that common sense may be regarded by others as appropriate or not depending on the depth of research and the comprehensiveness of material taken into account by that “sense.” Jeffrey’s opinion on Roswell — for me — fails in both ways. The depth of research on the documents is not there. Neither is the comprehensiveness of the witness material. I view this as a case of a

large and subjective pendulum swing, as a switch being flipped from “on” to “off” with no halting for all the intermediate stops. It is a dangerous analytical procedure.

“It is much easier to accept a simple falsity, than a complex truth.”

David Cummings, University of Alberta

If we hold idealistic Platonist views, then the Truth will ultimately be simple. But, I suspect even for Plato, in the real business of living and exploring, simple common sense is a crude tool to be used sparingly, and certainly not in concert with the ignoring of complexity nor the inconveniences of contrary witnesses and their details.

Roswell: What was it? Without the physical specimens to test, it is impossible to say. At this moment, it seems to me (as James McDonald would say), that a crashed piece of non-terrestrial technology is “the least unsatisfactory hypothesis.” But I am ready to learn. That is why I have spent so much time reading all these old documents over the years that Jeffrey and I see so differently.

References

- FBI. (1947). FOIA'd documents package from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, covering the year 1947 and beyond. *Fund for UFO Research*, Volume 1. FUFOR: Mt. Rainier, MD.
- Gross, L. (1988). *UFOs: A History. Volumes 1 and 2*. Fremont, CA: private printing.
- LaParl, William (1996). Letter to Kent Jeffrey (and others), March 9, 1996. (Contact Jeffrey or Swords if you would like a copy)
- Loedding, A. C. (1954). Princeton engineer believes flying saucers the real thing. *Trenton, (N.J.) Times-Advertiser*, October 10, 1954.
- Randle, K. (1997). Randle responds to Jeffrey on Roswell. *MUFON Journal*, 351, 7, July.
- Randle, K. & Schmitt, D. (1991). Collection of ten articles. *The Roswell Report* (editor: George Eberhart). Chicago, Illinois: CUFOS.
- Randle, K. & Schmitt, D. (1994). *The Truth About the UFO Crash at Roswell*. New York: Avon.
- Ruppelt, E. (1956). *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*. Garden City: Doubleday and Co.
- Ruppelt, E. (n.d.). *The Edward Ruppelt Manuscript Files*. Held for CUFOS by the author in Kalamazoo, Michigan.
- Swords, M. D. (1991). *The Summer of 1947, the Roswell Report*. (editor: George Eberhart). Chicago, Illinois: CUFOS.
- Swords, M. D. (1996). Donald Keyhoe and the Pentagon. *Journal of UFO Studies*, n.s.#6: 195.
- Swords, M. D. (1997). The McCoy letter. *International UFO Reporter* Vol. 22,1: 12, 27.
- Swords, M. D. (n.d.). Project Sign and the estimate of the situation (manuscript in referee stage). *Journal of UFO Studies*, n.s. 7.
- Twining, N. (1947). *AMC Opinion Concerning Flying Disks*. Letter: Twining to CG, Army Air Forces, September.
- United States Air Force (USAF). A series of documents obtained from the United States Air Force through the Freedom of Information Act. They are as follows:
- USAF (1947a). Letter, Col. Howard McCoy to CG, Army Air Forces. September 24, 1947.
- USAF (1947b). Letter exchange, McCoy and Col. George Garrett, c. September 24, 1947.
- USAF (1947c). Memorandum from Headquarters European Command to Counter Intelligence regions. October 20-28, 1947.
- USAF (1947d). Letter, Gen. George McDonald to Director, USAF Research and Development. December 22, 1947.
- USAF (1947e). Letter, Gen. L. C. Craigie to CG, AMC (establishing Project Sign). December 30, 1947.
- USAF (1948a). Letter, Capt. R. R. Sneider to CS, USAF. October 7, 1948.

- USAF (1948b). Letter, Col. Howard McCoy to CIA, ONI, USA. October 7, 1948.
- USAF (1948c). Letter, Col. Wilton Earle to Chief, ONI. October 14, 1948.
- USAF (1948d). Letter, Col. William Clingerman to CS, USAF. October 22, 1948.
- USAF (1948e). Letter, Gen. Charles Cabell to CG, AMC. November 3, 1948.
- USAF (1948f). Letter, Chief, Naval Intelligence to DI, USAF. November 4, 1948.
- USAF (1948g). Letter, Col. Howard McCoy to CS, USAF. November 8, 1948.
- USAF (1948h). Memorandum, Directorate of Intelligence, re: information for Dr. George Valley. November 22, 1948.
- USAF (1948i). Memorandum, Gen. Charles Cabell, re: publicity surrounding flying saucers. November 30, 1948.
- USAF (1948j). Letter, Col. Howard McCoy to CS, USAF. December 2, 1948.
- USAF (1948k). Letter, Col. William Clingerman to Dr. George Valley. December 2, 1948.
- USAF (1948l). Letter, Col. Howard McCoy to CS, USAF. December 7, 1948.
- USAF (1948m). Report, Analysis of Flying Object Incidents in the U.S. Air Intelligence Report #100-203-79. USAF Directorate of Intelligence and Office of Naval Intelligence. December 10, 1948.
- USAF (1948n). Report, Capt. R. R. Sneider to DI, USAF. Air Intelligence Information Report #102-122-79. December 20, 1948. Also in Blue Book microfilms.
- USAF (1949a). Letter, Col. William Clingerman to CS, USAF. February 9, 1949.
- USAF (1949b). Letter, Col. William Clingerman to DI, USAF. April 5, 1949.
- USAF (1949c). Memorandum, Maj. Jerry Boggs, re: USAF report to be released simultaneously with Sidney Shalett's article. April 25, 1949. United States Air Force — Scientific Advisory Board (USAF-SAB).
- USAF (1948). (Document obtained by FOIA by William LaParl). Minutes of the USAF-SAB meeting of March 17 and 18, 1948, transcription, von Karman, Theodore
- USAF (1948). Memorandum for the Director of Research and Development, April 9, 1948; and listings of the USAF Scientific Advisory Board for 1948.