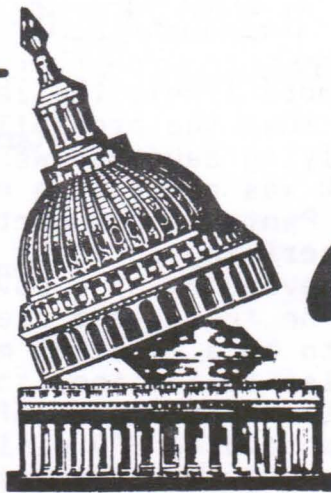


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## THE PENTACLE MEMO: HOW IMPORTANT?

In his book FORBIDDEN SCIENCE (North Atlantic Books, 1992), author Jacques Vallee discusses a mysterious document which he nicknamed the "Pentacle Memo." The document was discovered during a reorganization of Dr. J. Allen Hynek's files by Dr. Vallee back in 1967. He described it as having been written on January 9, 1953, a mere few days before the CIA's famous Robertson Panel was convened. Classified "Secret-Security Information," it was addressed to Miles E. Coll for relay to Captain Edward Ruppelt, the purpose of which was to recommend procedures on handling UFO reports sent to ATIC (Air Technical Intelligence Center based at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio).

Vallee did not name the author of the document in his book, the book itself being a collection of diary-type entries dating from various times in the past. Given that the document was classified and that there appears to have been no declassification procedure applied to it, Vallee was being cautious in naming names - ergo the coined term "Pentacle."

What is significant about it? Vallee focused upon several issues raised in the memo:

- 1) Pentacle described an analysis of thousands of UFO cases by the government prior to the memo being written.
- 2) Pentacle wanted an agreement between ATIC and Project Stork as to "what can or cannot be discussed" at the Robertson Panel meetings.
- 3) Pentacle recommended certain techniques by which higher quality scientific information could be gathered on UFOs.

A bit of explanation: "Project Stork" was a code name applied to work being done at the Battelle Memorial Institute, a Columbus, Ohio think tank specializing in scientific matters. The work involved conducting a statistical study of UFO reports for the Air Force in an effort to determine if the objects "represented technological developments not known to this country." Included in the study as well were pattern analyses and an attempt to "model" what UFOs looked like and how they flew, assuming of course that they were exotic vehicles. The culmination of the study was Project Blue Book Special Report 14, a thick document composed largely of charts and graphs. Report 14 was released late in 1955, some time after the study had been concluded by Battelle. While acknowledging that with respect to some of the sightings, the more complete the information

and the better the report, the more likely the report would remain an unknown, Report 14 finalized that the probability of the unknowns in the Blue Book files being "flying saucers" was extremely low.

This is what Project Stork was about in a nutshell. Vallee expressed his present view of the Pentacle document in the epilog to FORBIDDEN SCIENCE (pg. 427), describing it as an "ominous" document in that to some it can be taken as evidence of a cover-up of secret Stork conclusions. It also advocates, he feels, the creation of "deliberate artificial UFO flaps" designed to be a "blatant manipulation of belief systems" by the government. Vallee is inclined to accept that this is fact, citing the example of William Moore's "confession" in 1989 of having been a government agent spreading UFO disinformation. CAUS is already on the record as questioning the government's involvement in this claim but it is not the issue at hand.

Vallee's interpretation has been given additional play in recent press coverage of Pentacle. A recent issue of "UFO" magazine (Sunland, California) has referred to the document as a "smoking gun" proving the existence of secret UFO studies outside of Blue Book's activities.

If all of this is true, then the document is a significant revelation. CAUS has obtained a complete copy for examination. To preface our comments, normally we do not accept as fact a government UFO document without an official cover letter or release by authority. We have stated in the past that lack of such attribution raises suspicions about the genuineness of a document. In this instance we will make an exception considering Dr. Vallee's high character, his sensible explanation of the document's origin and the fact that we can see no obvious sign of it being fraudulent. We are reproducing it on pages three and four.

Our remarks paragraph by paragraph:

1) Nothing unusual here. A proposal on how to handle UFOs is announced by the memo's author, H.C. Cross, a staff member at Battelle working within Project Stork. It is stressed that the recommendations in the memo were preliminary due to the incompleteness of the study that was ongoing. This is a very important point to keep in mind as one considers the rest of the memo. It is also stated that several thousand reports were studied. In the Air Force's official investigation, Project Blue Book statistics indicate that from June 1947 through December 1952, over 2300 reports were on file. Since the Blue Book file adequately satisfies the numbers issue raised in the memo, where is the evidence here for input from a "secret study?" Perhaps it is somewhere else.

2) Cross was disturbed that the CIA's Robertson Panel was being convened prior to Stork's work being finished. To us this is quite understandable. If a scientist is in the midst of conducting an investigation, he should not be expected to hand over an incomplete job to another scientific panel for a value judgement of the subject matter in question. It would be improper and unscientific, particularly considering the scope of the CIA's "blue ribbon" panel - meeting for a total of some 12 hours over portions of a few days! The scientificness of the Robertson Panel can surely be brought into question but we don't believe that was their purpose. The purpose was more political than scientific. Should the Battelle people be upset? If I were one of them, I would have been outraged at the CIA's interference in a scientific study.

Much has been made of the comment by Cross as to an agreement between Stork and ATIC on what could and could not be discussed at the Robertson Panel, implying that untold information about flying saucer reality was being withheld. Nothing of the sort is evident. Since the

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**SECURITY INFORMATION**

G-1579-4

cc: S. D. Thomas  
H. C. Cross/A. B. Westerman  
L. R. Jackson  
W. T. Reid  
P. J. Riempel  
V. W. Ellzey/R. J. Lund  
Files

January 9, 1953

*Extra*

Mr. Miles E. Coll  
Box 9575  
Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio

Attention Capt. Edward J. Ruppelt

Dear Mr. Coll:

This letter concerns a preliminary recommendation to ATIC on future methods of handling the problem of unidentified aerial objects. This recommendation is based on our experience to date in analyzing several thousands of reports on this subject. We regard the recommendation as preliminary because our analysis is not yet complete, and we are not able to document it where we feel it should be supported by facts from the analysis.

We are making this recommendation prematurely because of a CIA-sponsored meeting of a scientific panel, meeting in Washington, D. C., January 14, 15, and 16, 1953, to consider the problem of "flying saucers". The CIA-sponsored meeting is being held subsequent to a meeting of CIA, ATIC, and our representatives held at ATIC on December 12, 1952. At the December 12 meeting our representatives strongly recommended that a scientific panel not be set up until the results of our analysis of the sighting-reports collected by ATIC were available. Since a meeting of the panel is now definitely scheduled we feel that agreement between Project Stork and ATIC should be reached as to what can and what cannot be discussed at the meeting in Washington on January 14-16 concerning our preliminary recommendation to ATIC.

Experience to date on our study of unidentified flying objects shows that there is a distinct lack of reliable data with which to work. Even the best-documented reports are frequently lacking in critical information that makes it impossible to arrive at a positive identification, i.e. even in a well-documented report there is always an element of doubt about the data, either because the observer had no means of getting the required data, or was not prepared to utilize the means at his disposal. Therefore, we recommend that a controlled experiment be set up by which reliable physical data can be obtained. A tentative preliminary plan by which the experiment could be designed and carried out is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Based on experience so far, it is expected that certain conclusions will be reached as a result of our analysis which will make obvious the need for an effort to obtain reliable data from competent observers using the

necessary equipment. Until more reliable data are available, no positive answers to the problem will be possible.

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SECURITY INFORMATION

Mr. Miles E. Coll

-2-

January 9, 1953

We expect that our analysis will show that certain areas in the United States have had an abnormally high number of reported incidents of unidentified flying objects. Assuming that, from our analysis, several definite areas productive of reports can be selected, we recommend that one or two of these areas be set up as experimental areas. This area, or areas, should have observation posts with complete visual skywatch, with radar and photographic coverage, plus all other instruments necessary or helpful in obtaining positive and reliable data on everything in the air over the area. A very complete record of the weather should also be kept during the time of the experiment. Coverage should be so complete that any object in the air could be tracked, and information as to its altitude, velocity, size, shape, color, time of day, etc. could be recorded. All balloon releases or known balloon paths, aircraft flights, and flights of rockets in the test area should be known to those in charge of the experiment. Many different types of aerial activity should be secretly and purposefully scheduled within the area.

We recognize that this proposed experiment would amount to a large-scale military maneuver, or operation, and that it would require extensive preparation and fine coordination, plus maximum security. Although it would be a major operation, and expensive, there are many extra benefits to be derived besides data on unidentified aerial objects.

The question of just what would be accomplished by the proposed experiment occurs. Just how could the problem of these unidentified objects be solved? From this test area, during the time of the experiment, it can be assumed that there would be a steady flow of reports from ordinary civilian observers, in addition to those by military or other official observers. It should be possible by such a controlled experiment to prove the identity of all objects reported, or to determine positively that there were objects present of unknown identity. Any hoaxes under a set-up such as this could almost certainly be exposed, perhaps not publicly, but at least to the military.

In addition, by having resulting data from the controlled experiment, reports for the last five years could be re-evaluated, in the light of similar but positive information. This should make possible reasonably certain conclusions concerning the importance of the problem of "flying saucers".

Results of an experiment such as described could assist the Air Force to determine how much attention to pay to future situations when, as in the past summer, there were thousands of sightings reported. In the future, then, the Air Force should be able to make positive statements, reassuring to the public, and to the effect that everything is well under control.

Very truly yours,

H. C. Cross

Stork work was incomplete, its scientists were concerned that the Robertson Panel would be fed unrefined and out-of-context information, causing Stork's "preliminary recommendation" to appear less than polished.

3) This section is a critical blow to any speculation that Stork was suppressing hidden truths about saucers. We are told in essence that the reports being studied were not very good in terms of proving anything other than that the reports existed. To quote the memo, "...there is a distinct lack of reliable data with which to work." "...even the best-documented reports are frequently lacking in critical information that makes it impossible to arrive at a positive identification." "...even in a well-documented report there is always an element of doubt about the data..." How in blazes can one accuse this bunch of suppressing important, hidden UFO secrets when the above quoted assessments, in a secret document no less, would be enough to make any pro-UFO proponent cringe?

The issue of crashed saucers comes into focus again. Repeatedly we have seen formerly classified materials arguing strongly against the existence of physical UFO evidence, most recently in our September 1992 issue ("The Estimate of the Situation"). Sometimes the documents in question argue strongly for UFO reality but against physical evidence. In this Pentacle document once again we see this situation become prominent. Why would the Air Force proceed with the Battelle study in secret, withholding the critical evidence, and try to extract patterns and flight characteristics from what Battelle told them was a group of lousy reports? Why bother when the Robertson Panel did a negative study for far less time and money than Battelle, and the Battelle study proceeded beyond the conclusion of the Robertson Panel? There is no sense to this if saucers were in our hands. These are fair questions to ask and it would be nice to get some sensible answers.

4) More pessimism is expressed about the usefulness of existing sightings.

5) A detailed explanation of the "controlled experiment" is given here. It is a surprisingly old idea dusted off and given new life. Project Twinkle, a study coordinated by the Air Force's Cambridge Research Lab, attempted to gather hard information on sightings of the "Green Fireball" phenomena by instituting ground observation stations in areas of high fireball activity. Sightings of the strange green fireballs persisted for several years in the desert southwestern U.S. from the late 1940s through the early 1950s. Scientists working on the problem were quite baffled by the activity but, ultimately, could not link this to the flying saucer phenomena. Twinkle stations were equipped with cameras, telescopes, theodolites, and other detection equipment, much like what Pentacle later proposed.

The problem with Twinkle was that in areas of high fireball activity, as soon as the stations were set up and manned, the sightings would cease. Whether this in itself is evidence of intelligence is open to question. Before this issue could be answered with any certainty, the undoubtable strangeness of the sightings needs to be confirmed. Twinkle could not do it because of the sudden lack of sightings. Catch 22!

There was no assurance that the phenomena would perform for an enrapt audience, as the Air Force had soon discovered. After a few failed attempts to thoroughly document anomalous events in various locations, the Air Force dropped Project Twinkle.

Additionally, the Air Force had set up a Videon camera network at air bases across the country toward the end of 1952. At first the cameras

were equipped with diffraction gratings to separate the component elements of the light emissions of the photographed sources and make a permanent record of the object's spectra. Later however, due to technical problems in preserving the integrity of the diffraction grating, the Air Force had the gratings removed. Eventually the program was shelved for lack of fruitful results. The difficulty in obtaining such evidence was comparable to standing on a street corner with a camera and waiting for an accident to happen. It could happen in five minutes or it could never happen at that location. The use of manpower and fair amounts of money, coupled with an expectation of low-yield results, did not encourage the Air Force to give such programs high priority, especially during the depths of the Cold War.

Vallee also seems to interpret the last sentence of paragraph five as evidence of "deliberate artificial UFO flaps" created by the government to manipulate our belief systems. We disagree.

In this and later paragraphs Pentacle describes a coordinated program to try and gather the highest quality UFO sighting information. In fact the whole theme of the document is that UFOs are a serious matter requiring a careful, measured scientific study. If sighting quality was already considered subpar, as the memo indicates, why enact a monstrously expensive program to introduce hoaxes and pretend that the ground stations were performing a scientific study? Why have the stations at all and just create the hoaxes? The public can be fooled by even modest fakes like laundry bag balloons or aerial flares, nudged along with suggestive remarks by military people as to the "mysterious nature" of the incidents.

What the memo does suggest is that in the process of creating and refining a system by which good, solid information about UFOs can be collected, the introduction of many types of aerial activity "secretly and purposefully" scheduled in the areas can be used to test the new system to determine if it is capable of separating known from unknown. Our evidence of this is in paragraph seven of Pentacle, "It should be possible by such a controlled experiment to prove the identity of all objects reported, or to determine positively that there were objects present of unknown identity."

Paragraph seven further states, "Any hoaxes under a set-up such as this could almost certainly be exposed, perhaps not publicly, but at least to the military." Pentacle refers here to outside hoaxes, not the created hoaxes suggested by Vallee of this neo-Twinkle. Again we see concern about separating false information from potentially important unknowns. Exposing such discovered hoaxes to the public, as a result of a secret monitoring program, would draw public attention, reveal the location and scope of the program, compromising its integrity, and invite outside hoaxes designed to fool neo-Twinkle. A three-ring circus would ensue, forcing the program's relocation or its cancellation altogether.

Time and expense, as well as a low expectation of success as time went along, were ultimately fatal to Project Twinkle and the Air Force's Videon camera programs for detecting aerial anomalies. Seeing these ideas revived again by Pentacle could not have been especially exciting for the Air Force to consider. On paper it worked -- in practice it had proven otherwise.

A final word by Pentacle alludes to "thousands" of sightings during the summer of 1952. He could not have meant strictly the Blue Book files as the actual number of recorded sightings on file total less than a thousand. Does this mean a secret study had funneled more reports than was previously understood to Battelle? No, because a literal reading of Pentacle's last paragraph reveals a more general commentary on the

level of activity during the summer than a quantitatively accurate assessment of actual sighting numbers in the Air Force's files. The head of Blue Book, Captain Edward Ruppelt, estimated that they had received only some ten percent of the total number of UFOs seen (THE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS, Pg. 210). The press carried a large number of reports never seen by Blue Book. Pentacle made a reasonable judgement as to the intensity of the sightings during the summer of 1952 wave without specifically connecting his "thousands" to Blue Book.

This then is our view of the Pentacle memo. The document is an interesting look at the early years of UFO investigations by the government. We feel it is not proof of a secret UFO study that went beyond what is already known. There is no evidence that the controlled experiment ever became a reality. That is not to say that there never was a secret UFO study, or that the government has never manipulated the UFO phenomena for its own purposes. In this case, unfortunately, too much is being read into the situation that isn't so readily apparent.

#### CAN WE TRUST OFFICIAL FILES?

This was a question asked by UFO historian Loren Gross after studying official reports on an October 4, 1955 UFO incident over the Soviet Union. The sighting involved former U.S. Senator Richard Russell, who served for a long period as Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and several other individuals riding on a train. The files came from several sources within the government, including the FBI and CIA.

Briefly described, the incident went like this (from the CIA version):

"At 1630, 4 Oct. 55, I boarded a train at (deleted) in the company of (deleted) one of whom shared a Wagon-Lit compartment with me; the other two occupied the adjoining compartment. The train ran very slowly, making every stop; I would estimate its overall speed at 20 m.p.h. Exactly two hours and 40 minutes out of (deleted) one of our group in the compartment next door entered my compartment and said, 'Did you see that out there? I just saw a flying saucer.' I and my compartment companion were about to laugh it off when the man from next door pointed out of the window again, and then we all saw the following sight."

"On the lefthand side of the train, between the train (deleted) was a large air field. The evening was dark but clear. A huge search (deleted) on the field itself, (deleted) on a triangular object on the ground which I would say was probably not more than two miles distant from the railroad. (Collector's comment: Source first estimated that the air field was about five miles away but, on further reflection, changed the distance to the object to two miles). The size of the object was comparable to that of (deleted) jet fighter, with a squat shape and in the form of an equilateral triangle. There were three lights on the object, one on each point of the triangle, presumably two wing lights and a tail light. As we watched, it was ejected from its launching site, making not less than three and not more than seven fast spirals in the air, after which it climbed extremely fast at about a 45 degree angle. We watched it climb and saw it reach a high altitude, the search (deleted) followed it all the way."

"I wish to emphasize that this was no ordinary take-off but a

launching procedure more like a missile ejection. Our companion from next door reported that this was the second launching in rapid succession."

"I believe that the train at the time of the sighting was between 50 and 65 miles south of (deleted). While the four of us were still watching the object ascending, the steward came in and pulled down the blinds. When I began to protest, the steward pointed toward the rear of the car and shook his head, (deleted)."

The documentation on the Russell affair tends to be involved, and of course information has been deleted from the various versions. The point which Gross brings forth in a volume of his UFOs: A HISTORY (a series he has been producing for many years) is that the different versions of the Russell sighting that exist are just that -- different! The writers of the assorted reports do not tell the same story.

There are three distinct versions available: Senator Russell's statements to Herbert Scoville, the CIA's Assistant Director of Scientific Intelligence, on October 27, 1955; a CIA report written prior to the Scoville interview (quoted above); and an Air Intelligence Information Report by Lt. Col. T. Ryan based upon an interview with Army Lt. Col. E.U. Hathaway, one of the witnesses, dated October 14, 1955. Gross has documented numerous specific instances where the "facts" of the story sharply differ from one another.

The reasons for this, according to Gross, seem to be that the facts altered according to the particular theory of explanation expounded by the source agency. The Ryan version supports a disc-shaped craft, an unexplained object. The CIA version supports a high performance aircraft developed by the Soviet Union. Russell's testimony to the CIA discusses unusual lights which may or may not have been conventional. In this last instance Scoville rejects a previous CIA report, saying that he doesn't believe that what was seen was due to a saucer-shaped or unconventional aircraft. Instead, he believed that the lights could have been conventional jets.

How does one explain the differences otherwise? The easiest way is to attribute them to simple misreporting. As people often do, facts could have been misinterpreted and became distorted. However, it is hard to believe that U.S. intelligence could have gotten things so messed up in relating hard information on a relatively brief set of details -- messed up a couple of different times in fact. It can't be ruled out but it seems unlikely. Perhaps then the witnesses changed their stories? Why? They didn't seem to know what they were looking at anyway. Surely the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee realized how important it was to relate accurate intelligence information. Again, it is possible but seems unlikely.

The disturbing idea is raised that we may not be able to completely trust the details reported in government UFO files, particularly with single source stories. It is a cautionary note on being absolute in this subject, a dangerous practice which needs to be tempered.

Full details of Gross's ideas on this issue appear in UFOs: A HISTORY: 1955 SEPTEMBER 15TH to DECEMBER 31ST. Contact: Loren Gross; 690 Gable Dr.; Fremont, California 94538.

#### FINAL NOTES

We neglected to thank Ed Komarek in our last issue for the Common Cause article. We are planning several historical pieces which should raise a few eyebrows, including a new look at the 1952 wave, and I do mean a new look. Were those sightings as out-of-control as has always been thought, or did the Air Force have more of a handle on them than anyone realized?