

Project Moon Dust

Chapter 8 - The History of Project Moon Dust

by

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When United States Senator Jeff Bingaman asked the Air Force about a classified project called Moon Dust, Lieutenant Colonel John E. Madison of the Congressional Inquiry Division, Office of Legislative Liaison, wrote, "There is no agency, nor has there ever been, at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, which would deal with UFO's or have any information about the incident in Roswell. In addition, there is no Project Moon Dust or Operation Blue Fly. Those missions have never existed."

What the documentation, now available thanks in part to the Freedom of Information Act, and the pioneering work of Clifford Stone, tells us is that Madison's letter to a United States Senator is, at best, inaccurate. The question can be asked was he merely uninformed, or was he purposefully lying to a Senator? Stone, a researcher in Roswell, New Mexico, challenged Madison's response with a series of documents, which had been obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests. He pointed out that documents originally classified as secret and since downgraded, mentioned the code name Moon Dust, and specifically a project for UFO-related materials. It also established as fact the location of the parent unit being at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

The response to this documented information was another letter to Senator Bingaman, apparently from Madison's boss in the Congressional Liaison Office. Colonel George M. Mattingley, Jr., wrote, "This is in reply to your inquiry in behalf of Mr. Clifford E. Stone on the accuracy of the information we previously provided to your office. Upon further review of the case (which was aided by the several attachments to Mr. Stone's letter), we wish to amend the statements contained in the previous response to your inquiry."

It is necessary here to suggest that the Air Force had been caught in a lie (or misinformation) to Senator Bingaman because the documents were available to positively refute them? We can look at this as a simple mistake, based on the lack of information available to the Congressional Liaison Office and Lieutenant Colonel Madison. It can be suggested that nothing nefarious was going on here. Madison simply wasn't aware of the classified Project Moon Dust and responded without checking the information, as he should have done.

We could believe that, except for the response written by Mattingley after Madison had been caught. It would seem that once they had been caught, they would be sure their information would be as accurate as possible.

Mattingley, in his letter to Bingaman to correct the previous mistakes, wrote, "In 1953, during the Korean War, the Air Defense Command organized intelligence teams to deploy, recover, or exploit at the scene downed enemy personnel, equipment, and aircraft. The unit with responsibility for maintaining these teams was located at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. As the occasion never arose to use these air defense teams, the mission was assigned to Headquarters, United States Air Force in 1957 and expanded to include the following peace-time functions: a) Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs), to investigate reliably

reported UFOs within the United States; b) Project MOON DUST, to recover objects and debris from space vehicles that had survived re-entry from space to earth; c) Operation BLUE FLY, to expeditiously retrieve Soviet Bloc equipment.”

Having access to the previously classified 4602d records, I know that Mattingley’s statements are not accurate. By the end of 1953, after the wave of summer sightings in 1952, after Blue Book had virtually ceased to exist, the 4602d was involved in UFO sighting investigations. Mattingley suggested the change came in 1957, but Mattingley is wrong. The only question is if he was as ill-informed as Madison, or if he was deliberately trying to suggest something else.

Mattingley also wrote, “These teams were eventually disbanded because of a lack of activity; Project MOON DUST teams and Operation BLUE FLY missions were similarly discontinued. The Air Force has no information that any UFOs were ever confirmed downed in the United States.”

Again, this simply isn’t the truth.; We know from released documents that Moon Dust wasn’t discontinued. Its code name was changed after it was compromised. Robert G. Todd, in a letter from the Air Force dated July 1, 1987, learned that the “nickname Project Moon Dust no longer officially exists.” According to Colonel Phillip E. Thompson, deputy assistant chief-of-staff, Intelligence, “It, [Project Moon Dust] has been replaced by another name that is not releasable. FTD’s [Foreign Technology Division, headquartered at Wright-Patterson] duties are listed in a classified passage in a classified regulation that is being withheld because it is currently and properly classified.”

And, we know, from documentation, much of it recovered from State Department records, that Moon Dust teams were notified and dispatched for various cases, some examples of which will follow here. It should be made clear that most of these cases deal with material and wreckage that is clearly of terrestrial origin. The point here is not to prove an extraterrestrial connection, but to confirm the use of Moon Dust teams, which contradicts the statements made by Colonel Mattingley to Senator Bingaman. The messages also confirm Moon Dust interest in UFOs and the involvement of the State Department.

On the night of March 25-26, 1968, four objects fell in an area of Nepal. The American embassy in Kathmandu, in a secret message dated July 23, alerted the 1127th USAF Field Activities Group, which had once been the 4602d, and the 1006th at Fort Belvoir, that they expected full cooperation with the government of Nepal. The subject of the message was...MOON DUST.

It is clear from the messages that the debris was readily identifiable to the staff at the embassy in Nepal. They had seen photographs of three of the items but had not been allowed to inspect the fourth. They noted that a “technical team should not be sent unless visual examination of the fourth object is felt essential.”

This is, of course, a backward way of getting to the point. However, the embassy did prove that technical teams were available and that they were dispatched. The composition of those teams was described in another document that surfaced in the various Freedom of Information Act requests made.

Stone provided me with a copy of a document created in November 1961. It seemed to be directing the creation of the reinforcement of AFCIN Intelligence Team personnel. That document, however, is now wrapped in controversy because two versions have been discovered.

First, we must understand what this document is. The problem, according to the opening statement is, "To provide qualified personnel to AFCIN intelligence teams." The document has a section deleted and then, in paragraph 2, subsection C, says, "In addition to their staff duty assignments, intelligence team personnel have peacetime duty functions in support of such Air Force Projects such as Moon Dust, Blue Fly, and UFO, and other AFCIN directed quick reaction projects which require intelligence team operational capabilities (see Definitions)."

It should be pointed out that this document ties Moon Dust, Blue Fly, and UFOs together. It points out that their assignments already existed, and they were already assigned personnel.

The definitions mentioned appear in paragraph 5. It covers not only those assigned to the teams, but also the terms used in the document itself. What is important here is the fact that "Moon Dust," "Blue Fly," and "UFO" are all parts of the definitions. Moon Dust is defined "As a specialized aspect of its overall material exploitation program, Headquarters USAF has established Project Moon Dust to locate, recover and deliver descended foreign space vehicles."

Although Mattingley defines Blue Fly as an operation to "expeditiously retrieve downed Soviet Bloc equipment," this document suggests that Blue Fly was "established to facilitate expeditious delivery to FTD of Moon Dust or other items of great technical intelligence interest." Certainly, Soviet Bloc equipment would fit into that definition, but it covers other items, including UFO-related debris, as well.

And finally, under definitions, it says, "Unidentified Flying Objects (UFO): Headquarters USAF has established a program for investigation of reliably reported unidentified flying objects within the United States. AFR 200-2 delineates 1127th collection responsibilities."

The second version of this document, one that I have seen, is exactly the same as the first, but contains a handwritten note that says it was a draft proposal and that it was never implemented. Robert Todd located this version. It is clearly the same as the first document, which I have in my possession, the difference being a handwritten note at the top. Barry Greenwood of Citizens Against UFO Secrecy suggested to me that the version Stone has, a copy of which he supplied to me, is the same as the version Todd has, with the exception of the handwritten note. According to Greenwood, the two versions are the same, and the source id the same, but someone inside the UFO community removed the handwritten note before releasing it to other UFO researchers. Greenwood seems to suspect Stone of having altered the document for the purpose of advancing his belief in Project Moon Dust and the missions it carried out.

Stone, on the other hand, claimed that he received his version from military sources without the handwritten note. His sources were not the same as those used by Todd, and he didn't receive his copy from Todd. Stone also makes the point that the handwritten note is irrelevant and refers only to the "Action Recommended" section at the end of the document. The other material, referring to "Factors Bearing on the Problem" and the "Discussion" reflects the situation as it already existed. In other words, the discussion about the composition of the teams and their missions was not a suggestion to develop those teams. The "not implemented" statement referred to adding, or tasking, additional Air Force personnel with Moon Dust.

So what we have, then, based on the documentation, including the disputed AFCIN intelligence team documents, are two letters from the Air Force to a United States senator that do not reflect accurate information. Even after being caught once, the Air Force came

back with information that was less than perfect. And even if Todd and Greenwood are right in asserting that the November 1961 document was merely a draft, it provides information about the various projects and operations that were in existence at the time.

In fact, the information about the composition of the intelligence teams is corroborated by other documents I recovered through both the Freedom of Information Act and general research conducted through the Air Force Archives at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama.

As mentioned elsewhere, I learned that members of the 4602nd and later the 1127th learned parachuting, horseback riding and animal packing, skiing, mountain climbing and various other survival skills. The November document, under "Criteria" notes, "Intelligence personnel can perform effectively only with an adequate background of training and experience. Inadequately qualified personnel in such assignment would be a liability rather than an asset to successful accomplishment of the mission."

The question that must be asked is if the Moon Dust personnel were ever used. Clearly, since the mission began in 1953 and continues today, as far as we can tell from the information available, we must answer, "Yes." This, too, is a contradiction to the letters from Madison and Mattingley.

Stone, in his response to the Madison letter, enclosed two debriefings of Soviet pilots in which UFO sightings were mentioned. If there was no interest in UFOs, Stone wondered what purpose was served by including that information. Mattingley replied, "Enclosures 3 and 4 of Mr. Stone's letter pertain to debriefings of two Soviet sources who were being interviewed for possible military information of interest. Their recounts of UFO sightings, even though they had occurred many times earlier, were included in the report for historical interest and were incidental to the main purpose of the report."

It is possible that Mattingley, in this respect, was being candid. But the question that can be asked is what historical interest can there be in sightings of objects that, according to the Air Force, do not exist? Why waste valuable time and effort recounting old UFO sightings? Just what was the historical context to which he referred?

Stone, in his rebuttal, argued, "Inclosures 3 and 4 were once classified Air Force Intelligence Reports. Enclosure 3 was IIR 1 517 0002 88, dated November 25, 1987, entitled Soviet Aircrew Sightings of Unexplained Phenomena. This report deals with UFO sightings that occurred in 1984 and later."

Stone asks, and rightly so, "What was the main purpose of these reports?? They deal directly with UFO sightings and make no references to Soviet missiles, or MIGs, or tanks. So what was the main purpose of these reports to which UFOs were incidental???"

So exactly what was Project Moon Dust? Did the Air Force ever activate it? Did the team members ever participate in the retrieval of an alien spacecraft?

We have a time frame for the beginning of the project from Mattingley's letter: 1953. As we have seen from the project's history, this was apparently an outgrowth of the situation in the summer of 1952. If Moon Dust came into existence at that time, to take over the investigative duties that had formerly rested with Blue Book, we have one set of answers. Blue Book was too public and the military was afraid of what might be spilled into the public arena because of that.

We must remember that in that time, at least publicly, the Air Force was telling us that there was no evidence for the existence of UFOs. If they were convinced of the accuracy of that statement, then why form teams to recover the material?

Teams were formed. We've already seen the documentation about it. And I know they were deployed. Again, there is documentation, but there is also personal testimony. Brigadier General Arthur Exon was the base commander at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in the mid-1960s. During an interview I conducted with him in May 1990, he said, "Well, the way this happened to me was that I would get a call and say that the crew or the team was leaving and they knew... There was such and such a time and they wanted an airplane and pilots to take X number of people to wherever... They might be gone two or three days or might be gone a week.

According to Exon, these were officers assigned to the Washington, D.C., area. They would fly into Wright-Patterson on commercial flights and then deploy on military aircraft. Their missions, according to Exon, were to investigate UFO sightings. He mentioned a case in Arizona where the craft had touched down and left a burned area.

These were, according to Exon, priority missions. He didn't ask questions, just alerted the proper facilities and scheduled the flights using their aircraft. It is clear, however, that these were Moon Dust teams engaging in the collection of UFO-related material Exon retired about the time that Project Blue Book was closed. His information doesn't suggest that any activity survived the end of Blue Book. However, it must be noted that Blue Book was based at Wright-Patterson, and if the officers coming into Ohio had been part of Blue Book, they would have already been there. In other words, it suggests an agency outside of Blue Book was interested in UFOs.

The other documents we've seen show that Moon Dust survived the end of Project Blue Book. There are, of course, the State Department records, and Colonel Thompson's letter telling Todd that the name, Moon Dust, had been changed.

Moon Dust became the real investigation of UFOs, the secret study that all of us claimed existed and that the Air Force denied. It was carried out by specially trained intelligence personnel. And, its existence was denied by the Air Force despite the facts.

Now we have all the data.

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Source: Project Moon Dust, Pages 151-161

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