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## "BOLENDER MEMO" REALITY CHECK By Robert G. Todd

In December of 1978, the Air Force Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) office in the Pentagon furnished a batch of records in response to my request submitted earlier that month. Among the documents was a three-page "Department of the Air Force Air Staff Summary Sheet," dated 20 December 1969, and signed by C. H. Bolender, Deputy Director of Development, Deputy Chief of Staff, Research and Development. This Summary Sheet has come to be called the "Bolender memo."

Two sentences in the text of the Summary Sheet have given rise to wildly exaggerated claims by self-styled "experts" with tabloid mentalities. These fanatical UFO hobbyists invariably present these two sentences out of context, and cynically exploit their own ignorance of the subject by filling the vast voids in their knowledge with their completely undocumented, paranoid ravings. This has led to the idea that the "Bolender memo" is "proof" that the "good" UFO reports never went to Project Blue Book, and that Blue Book was little more than a public relations ploy intended to divert attention away from the "real" UFO investigation carried out by the Air Force in complete secrecy.

Paragraph 4 of the Summary Sheet states: "Moreover, reports of unidentified flying objects which could affect national security are made in accordance with JANAP 146 or Air Force Manual 55-11, and are not part of the Blue Book system." Paragraph 6 observes that the termination of Blue Book would leave no official office to receive UFO reports, and states: "However, as already stated, reports of UFOs which could affect national security would continue to be handled through the standard Air Force procedures designed for this purpose."

Taken alone and out of context, and with a sinister spin applied in the right direction, these appear to be fairly damning statements suggesting that Blue Book was a fraud, and the UFO cases which could affect national security never made it to Blue Book. So let's put these two sentences back in context and see if that makes any difference.

Omitting the references to the corresponding attachment numbers, the full text of paragraph 4 reads as follows:

As early as 1953, the Robertson Panel concluded "that the evidence presented on Unidentified Flying Objects shows no indication that these phenomena constitute a direct physical threat to national security." In spite of this finding, *the Air Force continued to maintain a special reporting system.* [Emphasis added.] There is still, however, no evidence that Project Blue Book reports have served any intelligence function. Moreover, reports of unidentified flying objects which could affect national security are made in accordance with JANAP 146 or Air Force Manual 55-11, and are not part of the Blue Book system. The Air Force experience therefore confirms the impression of the University of Colorado researchers "that the defense function could be performed within the framework established for intelligence and surveillance operations without the continuance of a special unit such as Project Blue Book."

The "special reporting system" was the system established by the Air Force in 1948 requiring the reporting of UFOs in support of Project Sign, Blue Book's predecessor.

Doltish UFO "experts" have interpreted Bolender's remarks to mean that UFO reports made under JANAP 146 and Air Force Manual (AFM) 55-11 never went to Blue Book, that these "good" cases went somewhere else for investigation.

JANAP 146, "Communications Instructions for Reporting Military Intelligence Sightings (CIRMIS)," was first published in July of 1948, and was based on a similar publication that first appeared during World War II. The 1948 edition made no mention of UFOs, and imposed no requirement that UFOs be reported. UFOs were not included in JANAP 146 until September 1950, with the publication of JANAP 146(A). The title of the publication was changed to "Communications Instructions For Reporting Vital Intelligence Sightings From Aircraft (CIRVIS)," and the reports generated under this publication thereafter were referred to as "CIRVIS reports."

Based on Air Force Intelligence records located at the National Archives, and historical reports for the Air Force's Directorate of Intelligence, it seems clear that, once UFO reports were required under JANAP 146, a conflict arose between the two reporting systems. The Air Defense Command (ADC) was experiencing difficulty in getting follow-up reports from Air Force Intelligence. These follow-up reports apparently were going to the UFO investigators at Wright-Patterson AFB, but ADC was left hanging, which made their air defense mission suffer.

One result of this confusion was that the Air Force published Air Force Regulation (AFR) 200-3, "Reporting Vital Intelligence Sightings From Aircraft," on 2 July 1952, in order "[t]o put 'teeth' into the CIRVIS reporting program ...." Prior to publication of AFR 200-3, the Air Force also revised Directorate of Intelligence Office Memorandum No. 200-23, dated 22 April 1952, entitled "Responsibilities and Processing 'CIRVIS' Messages," which prescribed the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for handling CIRVIS reports within the Directorate of Intelligence. This office memo furnished a lot of details on how CIRVIS reports were handled.

According to Office Memo 200-23, "JANAP ... is worldwide instructions for the reporting of incidents observed while airborne which, in the opinion of the pilot, requires prompt defensive and/or investigative action by the Armed Forces." It further states that "CIRVIS is designed in large measure to prevent a second Pearl Harbor and provides for the most rapid and uninterrupted passing of raw information from an observer to the three agencies having the greatest interest ...." The three agencies were identified as:

- (1) Air Defense Command (ADC), "for positive air action if required";
- (2) Secretary of Defense (SECDEF), "for appropriate action by the three services"; and
- (3) Nearest Military Command, "for local evaluation and defense."

Paragraph 4g of Office Memo 200-23 specifically assigned AFOIN-2B (the Evaluations Division of the Directorate of Intelligence) with responsibility for "*Keeping ATIC informed of such reports as are pertinent to Project Bluebook.*" [Emphasis added.]

In October 1959, the reporting requirements under AFR 200-3 were shifted to AFR 55-88, entitled "Communications Instructions Reporting Vital Intelligence Sightings (CIRVIS) From Aircraft." With the May 1966 edition of AFR 55-88, copies of CIRVIS reports were being addressed directly to the Foreign Technology Division (FTD), the successor to the Aerospace Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC), and the home of Project Blue Book.

AFR 55-88 was superseded by Air Force Manual (AFM) 55-11, "Air Force Operational Reporting System," published on 20 May 1968. AFM 55-11 appears to have been a consolidation

of *all* reporting requirements imposed on the Air Force. These requirements involved a multitude of subjects, the vast majority of which had nothing whatever to do with UFOs. That portion of the manual dealing with UFOs was merely an abbreviated version of JANAP 146, knowledge of which has been available to the UFO field since at least 1955 when Donald Keyhoe's book, *The Flying Saucer Conspiracy*, was published.

The obvious point is that the available documentation clearly shows that the Air Force instituted procedures to be sure Blue Book was informed of CIRVIS reports of UFOs, even if the documentation proving this is difficult to find and not known to those "experts" who eagerly substitute their own peculiar ideas and speculations in place of the facts.

But why did two separate reporting systems exist? The single best explanation I have seen is found in the September 1959 "Staff Study" located among the Project Blue Book files at the National Archives. Paragraph 4 of the study says:

The methods by which UFO reports are forwarded is by TWX [teletype] or telephone from military installations, and by letter or phone from civil organizations or private citizens. This, when compared with the reaction time necessary for survival in event of an attack using modern weapons, is ridiculous. The ATIC interest in these objects, in view of the foregoing, can only be its intelligence or scientific and/or technical significance after successful defense action has been accomplished by another agency.

It should be emphasized again that the vast majority of CIRVIS reports undoubtedly had little or nothing whatever to do with UFOs. "UFO" reports (which, for ADC, included reports of Soviet aircraft which had not yet been identified as such) apparently were going to Air Force Intelligence in the Pentagon and to Blue Book at Wright-Patterson, with inadequate follow-up reports being sent to ADC, which was trying to fulfill the defense function. One might hope that even the most ardent UFO hobbyists would agree that the defense mission should take precedence over the more leisurely investigation of UFOs carried out by ATIC, and that the special reporting system that supported Blue Book was not adequate when it came to the timely reporting of *possible* threats to national security.

The "Bolender memo" did not state that CIRVIS reports of UFOs which could affect national security did not go to Blue Book. It merely acknowledged the existence of two separate reporting systems, intended to serve two entirely different purposes. Other documentation clearly shows that procedures were put in place to make sure Blue Book received reports that fell within their area of responsibility. The "Bolender memo" points out that, with the termination of Blue Book and the special reporting system that supported it, any UFO reports which could affect national security would continue to be reported to the proper military authorities. In short, the subject of UFOs would cease to be a special study, and instead would be handled as a routine item of intelligence interest. Given the Air Force mission to defend the sovereign airspace of the United States, there is no way they can divest themselves fully of the UFO subject. And the termination of Blue Book was never intended to get the Air Force out of the UFO business completely. The record has *always* been clear on this point. Despite the availability of this record, so-called UFO "experts" continue to feign surprise when they learn that a particular "UFO" event has been documented in government files, suggesting some level of government interest in the subject.

But the government, and the Air Force in particular, is not blameless. They have helped cultivate the idea that a cover-up exists by repeatedly pronouncing that they got out of the UFO business when Project Blue Book was terminated in 1969. And every time new UFO-related records surface, the UFO "experts" point to the documents and say, "See, they're still conducting investigations in secret." These apparent contradictions lend credence to the idea that a cover-up exists, especially when exploited by supposed UFO "experts" for just that purpose. This, in turn, creates an atmosphere that invites all manner of wild, unsupported claims by certain UFO "visionaries" whose objective seems to be to establish themselves more firmly as "authorities" on the "UFO cover-up," which doesn't necessarily

mean these paranoid individuals don't honestly believe their own hype.

While there undoubtedly are a number of factors that explain the pronouncements claiming official disinterest in UFOs, the most compelling probably is that it's the simplest, easiest response to make, and one that discourages further inquiry by bluntly closing the door on the subject. Most likely contributing to the problem is a lack of personnel who really understand what was supposed to happen when Project Blue Book ended. As already noted, the end of Blue Book was never meant to be an end of Air Force interest in, or responsibility for, "UFO" reports. The Air Force's mission simply does not allow for it. As a result, pronouncements along these lines lack credibility from the start. Air Force personnel responsible for answering UFO-related queries simply are not knowledgeable enough to distinguish between what was *supposed* to happen when Blue Book ended, and what they *think* happened.

Another problem is one of semantics. The term "UFO" has two completely different meanings within the Air Force and within the UFO community. For the Air Force, a "UFO" could be an unidentified commercial aircraft that strayed from its flight plan, or a Russian aircraft testing U.S. defense systems. For the UFO community, the term "UFO" has come to mean spacecraft of extraterrestrial origin. No doubt when UFO buffs communicate with Air Force personnel, both assume the UFO buff is referring to spacecraft of extraterrestrial origin.

That is not to say that "UFOs" -- however one defines the term -- do not come to the attention of Air Force agencies from time to time. If any given "UFO" exhibits indications of being a *possible* threat, no doubt efforts are undertaken to "investigate" (another term that requires definition) the sighting, at least to the point where officials are satisfied that the "UFO" -- be it a Russian aircraft or some aerial phenomenon that remains unidentified -- poses no threat to national security. The transitory nature of all such sightings allows for little more.

One notable example of official, post-Blue Book interest in "UFO" sightings occurred in 1975 when a number of UFOs were reported over or in the vicinity of Strategic Air Command (SAC) bases in the northern tier states. The large quantity of official documentation generated on these sightings -- which includes CIRVIS reports released by the now-defunct Aerospace Defense Command (ADCOM) -- clearly demonstrates that no special project existed to investigate the sightings. The sightings came to the attention of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who eventually ordered that a Temperature Inversion Analysis (TIA) be performed whenever UFOs were reported. The requirement to perform TIAs was farmed out to Air Force Global Weather Central (AFGWC), and some few TIAs were performed on subsequent sightings. But even that meager effort to "investigate" UFO sightings eventually ceased.

The boring reality is that the Air Force's interest in UFOs is as transitory as the phenomenon itself, although certain elements within the UFO field would have us believe otherwise. When certain of these self-appointed "experts" cannot find the facts, they have an annoying habit of inventing new "facts" to take their place, from which they construct elaborate scenarios that are the envy of the best fiction writers. While this practice might be enormously convenient, it rarely (if ever) results in an accurate picture, especially when these new "facts" are little more than ignorance-based fantasies. This fantasy-driven game of "connect the dots" always results in a picture consistent with the belief that the government is engaged in a "Cosmic Water-gate," which in turn is consistent with the belief that Earth is being visited by one or more alien races. These supposed "experts" are so immersed in the subject and believe so strongly in the reality of ET visitations that they cannot accept the idea that the government doesn't share their beliefs and concerns. Their inability to accept this idea leads them to conclude that the government must be lying about their level of interest in the subject. And if they're willing to lie about it, well, the subject must be very important indeed. This circular reasoning has their fantasies feeding off of themselves.

The "Bolender memo" is *not* "proof" that the "good" UFO cases never went to Blue Book, notwithstanding pompous proclamations to the contrary.

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