

WHAT HAPPENED TO MUFON & PROJECT MATCH?



Fran Ridge

After 12 years with NICAP as Subcom Chairman, in 1972 I became a State Section Director for the Mutual UFO Network. In 1986 I became Indiana's MUFON State Director and FI for the Center for UFO Studies. With CUFOS' Robert Boyd I began work on a monthly 4-page UFO Intelligence Summary mailed out to local police, sheriff, state police, airport control tower, state field investigators and national subscribers. I set up State Section Directors (SSD's) and trained and tested 150 potential field investigators in Indiana's 92 counties. The Indiana group rapid deployment team consisted of approximately 30 active FI's throughout this period. my team investigated hundreds of cases.

I have a tall four-drawer filing cabinet on my north wall. In the beginning of the MADAR-III Project the top file had hanging folders, one for every week. Some were thicker than others but there were over 150 files that were crammed into that top drawer. Each folder represented several days of my work and many days by MADAR ops. These were potential anomalies derived from the previous week's MADAR Weekly Alert printout The one linked below is six pages and gives you an idea of what it was like.

[https://www.nicap.org/match/HitLists/Weekly-Reports/MADAR Weekly Alert_ 114 nodes reported an alertStart_.pdf](https://www.nicap.org/match/HitLists/Weekly-Reports/MADAR_Weekly_Alert_114_nodes_reported_an_alertStart_.pdf)

If a node had more than two hits they were pulled out as probable false alarms. The remaining ones were put into a report for the week so that ops and states could check their reports and the CMS for possible correlations. In the meantime I went over the monthly INTEL from NUFORC's database, looking for potential correlations. There were other things to do but all this took a lot of time during the first three days of every week for three years. This was Project MATCH.

We thought we were doing good. As our team grew and the MADAR sites kept popping up, there were some interesting potential correlations We had a good one every year for those first years, but all of them were BY MADAR ops. All code

blues. But all of the work we were putting into Project MATCH was to no avail.

We had five good correlations in 2020 and six in 2021, but all of them were BY and FROM ops, who were by the way MUFON members. Three of those incidents were the best we had. But not anything from the MATCH effort.

When the year 2022 began, all that changed. Putin invaded Ukraine and the intel from NUFORC was starting to pay off. There were about three dozen good correlations. MUFON was investigating cases, but not finding them. It was not MUFON's fault. The MUFON side of MATCH just was not working.

What DID work was we were finding PSOI (potential sightings of interest) in the NUFORC printouts and getting MUFON to investigate those. I assigned Jeremy Haslam the job of MADAR UFO Officer. He took over my job of going over the NUFORC cases. Each month I would get 30-50 sighting narratives from him, all NUFORC, then look for good sightings, then put the sighting location on the MADAR Display to see if there were any nearby MADAR sites. The 501 tracer told me which site to check for data. Not code blues. We already knew about those. When there were spikes in the magnetometer data I would have Christian Stepien, NUFORC's Technical Director see if we could get CI (contact information). When I got a CIR I forwarded that to Project MATCH Coordinator, Mike Panacello so he could assign an investigator. That wasn't the way Project MATCH was supposed to work but, no matter the code name, but it was working.

In 2023 we had seven good cases before June 27th when MADAR's software was changed and a library file was inadvertently left out and our entire network went down in one keystroke.

After tech support tried to correct the fiasco for months I was still going over 30-50 NUFORC cases per month, but now it was becoming abundantly clear that MADAR was not working! About the same time of this terrible predicament, MUFON had a CMS crash. I was starting to get paranoid. In the meantime there were no candidates nor CIRs for MUFON to investigate.

After a sudden and serious health issue and subsequent kidney surgery (Oct 17 to Jan 25) I was distracted from doing very much. But as soon as I had recuperated I contacted tech support and called for a complete, bottom up, back-to-white paper software build for MADAR. It took eight months to get the roll-back with the new operating system to work. And in September of 2024 we hit paydirt. The September data started looking pretty good.

There was a NUFORC entry, that appeared to be a major sighting by a crew onboard a surveillance instrument-laden drug interdiction aircraft, radar, and MADAR at Reef's Station, California. But since this involved the air traffic controller, pilots involved in secret work, all I could do was make an attempt to get the radar data ASAP. So I set up a task force with Robert Powell (SCU) and a few others who know FOIA and we went after the radar data. Robert was instrumental in getting radar data with FOIA at Stephenville, Texas.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwjzlGguwVc>

Christian Stepien had the name and phone number of the ATC, but was unable to give it out, so MUFON could not investigate.

In the meantime there was an inordinate amount of PSOI (potential sightings of interest) in the NMR cases that somebody needed to follow up on, and we did obtain CIR so I submitted four of them to MATCH.

On November 12th I received an email from Steve Hudgeons, MUFON's Director of International Development and Director of Investigations saying that I was not to contact any MUFON FIs and that MATCH was closed. That email was followed by an email from Robert Spearing, a long-time member of the MADAR team and Director of Investigations for International MUFON.

Robert Spearing:

“This email is addressed to you and multiple others who have been contacting us on the termination of cooperation between MUFON and the MADAR III Project. It's complicated but the quick answer was MUFON felt it was a one way street. No NUFORC Cases were coming to MUFON to investigate for months. We dissolved the Match Team and removed CAG Status from the 29 MUFON CAG Match F.I.s and miraculously, MADAR suddenly reached out to MUFON for help on multiple cases. Why?”

For some reason Robert Spearing did not believe my story. Steve Hudgeons, in my opinion, was ill-advised, and my story is the gospel truth. This was a complete misunderstanding and I can provide proof of the success of our coalition from its rocky start in 2018 until its unfortunate and untimely series of events in late 2023 and early 2024. Column 7 shows the source of a report and column 8 shows who investigated.

<https://www.nicap.org/match/analyses/20240310-CodeBluesPlusByYear.htm>

Maybe MATCH IS closed. But if MUFON has a major sighting they want MADAR checked or if MADAR has a major event that begs for a MUFON check, that is what the entire program was supposed to do. We should be working together.

I don't blame anybody at this point but I think reason should now be the proper response.