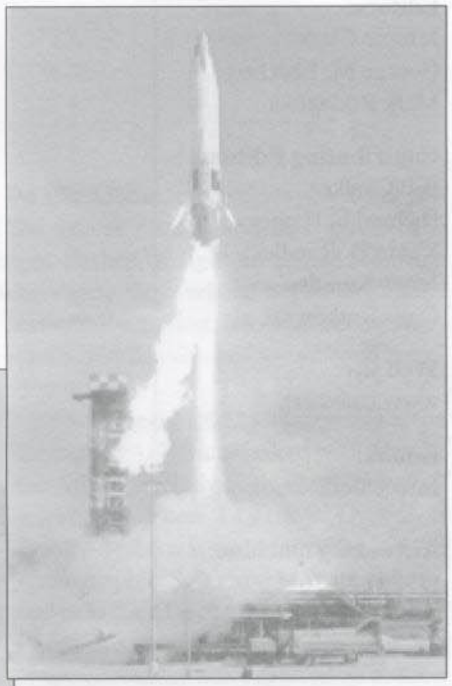
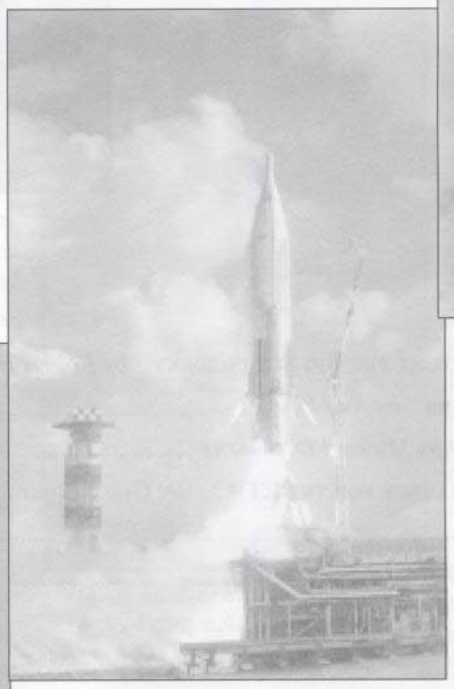
IUR
International UFO Reporter

Volume 31, Number 1

A SHOT ACROSS THE BOW





ATLAS ROCKET SHOT DOWN BY UFO IN 1964?

A SHOT ACROSS THE BOW: ANOTHER LOOK AT THE BIG SUR INCIDENT

BY ROBERT HASTINGS

The Big Sur UFO Incident has been studied and debated for more than two decades. Some researchers, including the author, consider it to be an unparalleled example of UFO interest in—and interference with—our nuclear missile systems. However, other ufologists dismiss the case, either because they believe it to be explainable in prosaic terms, or they view it as a complete fabrication, an absurd hoax perpetrated by two U.S. Air Force officers, former Lt. Bob Jacobs and retired Maj. Florenz Mansmann.

My own opinion is that the critics have judged prematurely and in an essentially uninformed manner. As I have discovered, many of them are badly *misinformed* about the case, having unreservedly accepted a dismissive but factually inaccurate summary of it published by a leading skeptical magazine. Other detractors have reviewed Jacobs's own presentation of the case—apparently inattentively—and have subsequently misstated his remarks in a most irresponsible manner.

USAF Atlas D missile blasts off from Patrick AFB in Florida.

In an effort to set the record straight, I present below unpublished or not widely circulated information about the Big Sur UFO incident which is highly relevant to this debate. I will also examine a number of fundamental errors in the above-mentioned debunking of the case.

First, a brief review of the alleged UFO encounter:

Early one morning in September 1964, an Atlas D Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) was launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, carrying aloft an experimental enemy radar–defeating system and dummy nuclear warhead. Shortly after nose-cone separation, as the warhead raced toward a targeted splashdown at Eniwetok Lagoon, in the Pacific Ocean, a disc-shaped UFO approached it. As the saucer chased and then circled the warhead, four bright flashes of light emanated from the unknown craft, whereupon the warhead began to tumble, eventually falling into the ocean hundreds of miles short of its intended target downrange.

Science fiction? Not according to the former USAF officer tasked with filming the Atlas launch through a high-powered telescope. Then Lt. (now Dr.) Bob Jacobs—who was assigned to the 1369th Photographic Squadron at Vandenberg, and held the title of Officer-in-Charge of Photo-instrumentation—states that the entire encounter was captured on motion picture film. According to Jacobs, while the UFO's maneuvers were readily discernable, other minute details—including the object's domed disc-shape—were only discovered during in-depth optical analysis conducted at Vandenberg.

At the time, the telescope/camera system was located at Big Sur, California, over 100 miles northwest of the launch site. The state-of-the-art instrument employed an ultra light-sensitive Image Orthicon—essentially a television-camera tube—whose images were filmed for study with a 35-mm movie camera.

Following the dramatic incident, says Jacobs, a 16-mm version of the amazing film was shown to a small, select group at Vandenberg. Immediately thereafter, the crucial frames were cut out and quickly confiscated by two "government agents"—possibly working for the CIA—who had been among those in attendance.

Importantly, Jacobs's account—relating to both the UFO incident itself and the subsequent cover-up—has been entirely endorsed by another officer, retired Maj. (later Dr.) Florenz J. Mansmann Jr. At the time, Mansmann had been assigned to Vandenberg AFB's Office of the Chief Scientist, 1st Strategic Aerospace Division. It was he who had ordered Lt. Jacobs to attend the restricted screening of the film in his office at the division's headquarters building.

Robert Hastings, a former semiconductor laboratory analyst, has researched nuclear weapons–related UFO sightings since 1973. Over the last 25 years, he has presented his findings at over 500 colleges and universities nationwide.

Dr. Jacobs's thorough and technically detailed summary of the incident, "Deliberate Deception: The Big Sur UFO Filming," was published in the January 1989 issue of the *MUFON UFO Journal* and is currently available online.[1]

Because Jacobs's account is still accessible, rather than extensively restating his remarks here, I have instead opted to present additional, pertinent information about the case. However, before doing so, some context might be useful, given the nuclear weapons aspect of the Big Sur incident.

UFOs AND NUKES

Ongoing UFO activity at U.S. nuclear weapons sites is now a documented historical fact. Declassified Air Force, FBI, and CIA records—principally secured via the Freedom of Information Act—have revealed unquestionably significant sighting incidents, decade after decade.

One FBI memo, dated January 31, 1949, refers to the repeated observation of "flying discs, flying saucers, and balls of fire" at or near Los Alamos, New Mexico—the birthplace of nuclear weapons—as early as December 1948. Numerous UFO reports were also made, throughout the 1950s, by personnel working at the nuclear materials production plants at Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Hanford, Washington; and Savannah River, South Carolina. Other now-released documents discuss UFO sightings at various Army and Air Force nuclear weapons staging and storage areas.

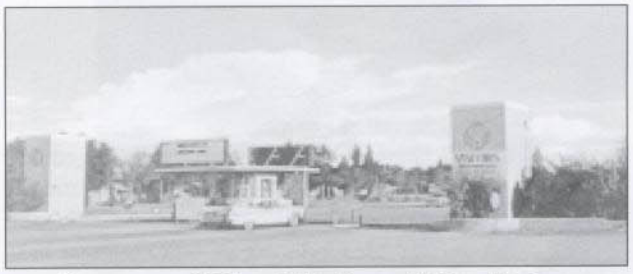
In short, very early in the Nuclear Age, which essentially began in 1945, *someone* piloting technologically superior, disc-shaped aircraft seemed intent on conducting ongoing surveillance of the U.S. government's top secret nuclear weapons sites.

An important, quasiofficial admission of these intriguing developments was provided by former U.S. Air Force Capt. Edward J. Ruppelt, in 1956, with the publication of his book, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*. As the first chief of Project Blue Book, Ruppelt had been privy to intelligence summaries relating to sightings at various highly-sensitive installations. "UFOs were seen more frequently around areas vital to the defense of the United States," he wrote, "The Los Alamos-Albuquerque area, Oak Ridge, and White Sands Proving Ground rated high."[2]

Each of these locations was directly or indirectly involved in America's nuclear weapons program. The Los Alamos laboratory conducted theoretical research and designed the bombs. In Albuquerque, Sandia Base (later renamed Sandia National Laboratories) engineered those weapons, which were then usually transported to nearby Manzano Base, an underground storage facility. Just west of Manzano, at Kirtland Air Force Base, the nukes were routinely loaded onto strategic bombers and cargo aircraft and flown to test sites in Nevada and the Pacific Ocean, as well as to military bases throughout the United States.

Meanwhile, at Oak Ridge, as reactors feverishly produced weapons-grade uranium and plutonium for an ever-expanding nuclear arsenal, frequent UFO reports were made by various security officers at the installation, as well as by military pilots and radar personnel at nearby bases.

At the third UFO hot spot mentioned by Ruppelt, White Sands Proving Grounds, located in the desert of southern New Mexico, the military was earnestly testing the rudimentary rockets which would, within a decade, evolve into highly-accurate, intercontinental delivery systems for U.S. nuclear warheads.



Entrance to Walker AFB, Roswell, New Mexico.

UFO SIGHTINGS AT NUCLEAR MISSILE SITES

Although nuclear-tipped missiles had not yet been deployed when Ruppelt wrote his book, my own research has confirmed that the first generation of U.S. ICBMs were also the target of ongoing UFO surveillance. For example, in 1964–1965, the Air Force's 579th Strategic Missile Squadron, based at Walker AFB in Roswell, New Mexico, experienced a rash of sightings at its Atlas ICBM sites. Startling testimony relating to these incidents has been provided by a number of former or retired missile launch officers, including Lt.Col. Philip E. Moore and Lt. Jerry C. Nelson.

579th Strategic Missile Squadron patch

Moore describes an incident in the fall of 1964, during which an extremely bright light first hovered over one Atlas launch site, then instantaneously moved off at unbelievable speed, only to instantaneously stop and hover over an adjacent missile site.

Nelson describes an equally dramatic series of UFO incidents at yet another Atlas site, during which an unlit, silent object hovered directly over the missile silo at low altitude while shining a bright light directly onto it. The former launch officer reports that the site's guards were extremely concerned and frightened by these mysterious encounters.

Similar testimony is offered by former 579th SMS missile facilities technicians and others. A summary may be found in my online article, *UFO Sightings at ICBM Sites and Nuclear Weapons Storage Areas*.[3] The material is excerpted from my forthcoming book, *The UFO/Nukes Connection*, which presents detailed information regarding such sightings at a number of U.S. Air Force ICBM bases between 1964 and 1996.

Significantly, on some occasions, the reported UFO

activity transcended mere surveillance and apparently involved deliberate, or at least incidental, interference with the missiles' functionality. Dramatic testimony to this effect has come from former ICBM launch and targeting officers, as well as missile maintenance personnel.

On that note, I return to the discussion of the Big Sur UFO incident.

Left to right: CWO Guy M. Spooner, Lt. Bob Jacobs, Mr. Paulson from Air Force Eastern Test Range, and Maj. Florenz J. Mansmann.

Letters of Jacobs and Mansmann

I first interviewed Jacobs by telephone in 1986. Afterward I was provided copies of personal correspondence between himself and Mansmann that referenced the Big Sur event. Additionally, researcher Lee Graham provided me with copies of letters Mansmann had written to him, as well as to another individual, Peter Bons, on the same subject.

In those letters, Jacobs and Mansmann were obviously still stunned by and marveling over the Big Sur UFO incident some 20 years later. It is important to note that this correspondence was never intended for publication, to support the validity of the case. Rather, it represents the private musings of two former USAF officers—involved and knowledgeable insiders—who had experienced what was obviously a life-changing event for each of them.

In one letter to Graham, dated January 30, 1983, Mansmann lamented the fact that Jacobs had gone public with the case. He wrote, "I do have some deep concerns about information, so vital to the future of mankind, falling into the wrong hands." He then alluded to the Soviets' theft of A-bomb secrets during World War II. Nevertheless, said Mansmann, because "the cat [was] out of the bag," he had decided to confirm Jacobs's account of the incident to various individuals who had written to him.[4]

Mansmann echoed this sentiment in a letter to Peter Bons, dated March 8, 1983: "Dr. Bob opened a pandoras box [sic] and in the last few months I have been bombarded with phone calls and letters. I try to answer the sincere ones."

Mansmann then discussed the image of the UFO captured on film: "Details would be sketchy and from memory. The shape was [a] classic disc, the center seemed to be a raised bubble . . . the entire lower saucer shape . . . was glowing and seemed to be rotating slowly. At the point of beam release—if it was a beam, it, the object, turned like an object required to be in a position to fire from a platform . . . but again this could be my own assumption from being in aerial combat." Mansmann's evaluation of the UFO's origin was explicit: ". . . the assumption was, at that time, extraterrestrial."[5]

At some point, Lee Graham forwarded copies of these letters to Bob Jacobs. The former lieutenant subsequently wrote to Mansmann on January 14, 1985, saying, "[Your letters to Graham and Bons] reveal a great deal more about that fateful piece of film than even I knew. It appears that you did a good deal of analysis on it at the time."

Jacobs continued, "The technology to which you and I were witness, the technology recorded on that few feet of film, indicates orders of magnitude [beyond] our relatively primitive efforts in mechanics, propulsion, and possibly quantum physics as well. Such intelligence might be suspected to regard us as little more than savages."

Jacobs then speculated that the UFO's aggressive action was intended as a reprimand. Referring to the four flashes of light which seemingly disabled the dummy warhead, he wrote, "those beams of light on our film [were] a WARNING. A shot fired across the bow, so to speak, of our nuclear silliness ship."[6]

Maj. Florenz J. Mansmann

To document these statements, I have forwarded copies of the correspondence between Jacobs and Mansmann to CUFOS, where it will now be made available to other researchers. Although Florenz Mansmann is deceased, Bob Jacobs and Lee Graham have given me permission to place the letters in the public record.

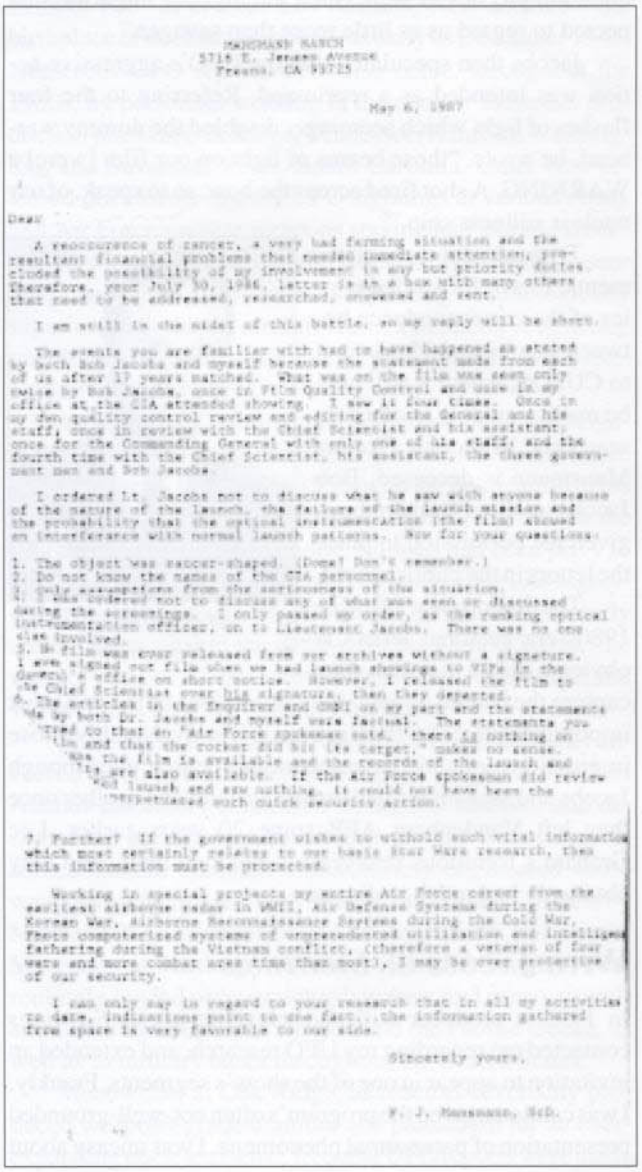
The importance of these 1980s-era personal letters is obvious. Taken together, they capture the candid, unguarded impressions of the two most important sources for the Big Sur UFO story. Notably, those impressions coincided to a remarkable degree, even though Jacobs and Mansmann had no contact with one another once they left Vandenberg AFB some 20 years earlier. Lee Graham's fortuitous intercession reunited them, and they obviously had much to discuss.

With Jacobs on *Sightings*

In 1995, a producer with the television series *Sightings* contacted me regarding my UFO research, and extended an invitation to appear in one of the show's segments. Frankly, I was cautious, given the program's often not-well-grounded presentation of paranormal phenomena. I was uneasy about

Sightings' general superficiality and tendency toward the melodramatic. But, of course, the series was produced in Hollywood, where audience-share ratings are far more important than the presentation of serious research. *Sightings* was designed to be popular entertainment, nothing more, capitalizing on the public's fascination with the paranormal.

After weighing the pros and cons, I eventually consented to appear on the show. The segment producer, Curt Collier, then asked me to contact a few of my ex-military sources, in the hope that one of them would participate in a joint appearance. My first thought was of Bob Jacobs. Although I had not spoken with him for years, I located Dr. Jacobs and asked if he would be interested in telling his story to a nationwide television audience. He readily agreed. Basically, Bob and I had each concluded that *any* public airing of the facts involved in the Big Sur UFO incident would be a positive development. While I would have much preferred a call from a producer at *60 Minutes*, offering to put Bob Jacobs's story on the air, I suspect that such a proposal would have never materialized.



FLORENZ MANSMANN
3716 E. Jensen Avenue
Fresno, CA 93725

May 6, 1987

Dear

A reoccurrence of cancer, a very bad farming situation and the resultant financial problems that needed immediate attention, precluded the possibility of my involvement in any but priority duties. Therefore, your July 30, 1986, letter is in a box with many others that need to be addressed, researched, answered and sent.

I am still in the midst of this battle, so my reply will be short.

The events you are familiar with had to have happened as stated by both Bob Jacobs and myself because the statement made from each of us after 17 years matched. What was on the film was seen only twice by Bob Jacobs, once in Film Quality Control and once in my office at the CIA attended showing. I saw it four times. Once in my own quality control review and editing for the General and his staff; once in review with the Chief Scientist and his assistant; once for the Commanding General with only one of his staff; and the fourth time with the Chief Scientist, his assistant, the three government men and Bob Jacobs.

I ordered Lt. Jacobs not to discuss what he saw with anyone because of the nature of the launch, the failure of the launch mission and the probability that the optical instrumentation (the film) showed an interference with normal launch patterns. Now for your questions:

1. The object was saucer-shaped. (Some! Don't remember.)
2. Do not know the names of the CIA personnel.
3. Only assumptions from the seriousness of the situation.
4. I was ordered not to discuss any of what was seen or discussed during the screenings. I only passed on order, as the ranking optical instrumentation officer, on to Lieutenant Jacobs. There was no one else involved.
5. No film was ever released from our archives without a signature. I was signed out film when we had launch showings to VIPs in the Guard's office on short notice. However, I released the film to the Chief Scientist over his signature, then they departed.
6. The articles in the Enquirer and CNBC on my part and the statements made by both Dr. Jacobs and myself were factual. The statements you refer to that an "Air Force spokesman said, 'there is nothing on film and that the rocket did hit its target,' makes no sense. Both the film is available and the records of the launch and [illegible] were also available. If the Air Force spokesman did review what I launch and saw nothing, it could not have been the [illegible] unpremeditated such quick security action.

7. Further? If the government wishes to withhold such vital information which most certainly relates to our basic Star Wars research, then this information must be protected.

Working in special projects my entire Air Force career from the earliest airborne radar in WWII, Air Defense Systems during the Korean War, Airborne Reconnaissance Systems during the Cold War, Photo computerized systems of unprecedented utilization and intelligence gathering during the Vietnam conflict, (therefore a veteran of four wars and more combat area time than most), I may be over protective of our security.

I can only say in regard to your research that in all my activities to date, indications point to one fact...the information gathered from space is very favorable to our side.

Sincerely yours,

F. J. Mansmann, Sgt.

Bob Jacobs

Because our schedules did not coincide, the *Sightings* staff interviewed Jacobs and me separately. Shortly after I arrived at Paramount Studios, producer Collier handed me a letter he had just received from Dr. Mansmann. I read it and was delighted. The retired USAF major had unequivocally endorsed—yet again—all of Jacobs's public statements about the Big Sur UFO case.

Dated November 15, 1995, the letter began, "Dear Mr. Collier, Responding to your Fed Ex letter of November 14, 1995 regarding the validity of the January 1989 MUFON [UFO] Journal story by Dr. Robert Jacobs, it is all true as presented. And yes, I have also responded to other researchers in the past, but only after Dr. Jacobs released the details of these sightings [sic] negating my secrecy bond."

Mansmann continued, "The Image Orthicon camera system we used in capturing the Unidentified Flying Object on film had the capacity to photograph the 'nuts and bolts' of the missile launch and its supersonic flight. . . . In retrospect, I now regret not being able to evaluate the film for more than 3 showings. The only people in attendance of the viewing were: The Director of the Office of the Chief Scientist and his assistant, two Government Agents, Lieutenant Jacobs and myself. The two Government Agents confiscated the film and placed it in a briefcase and departed after I had checked their authorization to leave with the film. I was instructed later by the Office of the Chief Scientist, the Judge Advocate General's office and my Commanding Officer to consider the incident top secret." Mansmann concluded his letter to Collier, "I am writing to confirm Dr. Jacobs' account."[7]

In other words, more than 30 years after the top secret incident and more than six years after Jacobs's article appeared in the *MUFON UFO Journal*, Dr. Mansmann was once again unreservedly verifying Bob Jacobs's report of a UFO shooting down a dummy nuclear warhead over the Pacific Ocean, in September 1964.

Florenz J. Mansmann Jr. died on July 4, 2000, but he remained adamant to the end that the extraordinary encounter—involving an extraterrestrial spacecraft—had occurred and was classified Top Secret.

Was the CIA involved?

Mansmann's description of the confiscation of the critical film footage—which he says was unreeled after the group viewing in his office and snipped out with scissors—has been challenged by some detractors of the Big Sur UFO case. Admittedly, there do seem to be inconsistencies relating to the "agents" in the former major's account, as summarized in his personal letters over the years.

For example, in a May 6, 1987, letter to researcher T. Scott Crain Jr. (left), Mansmann had unambiguously written that the agents were employed by the CIA. Specifi-

cally, he referred to the group screening in his office as "the CIA attended meeting," and later noted that he didn't "know the names of the CIA personnel."[8] However, some eight years later, Mansmann told Curt Collier that the film had been confiscated by "Government Agents." The subsequent use of this vague term seems curious, given the retired major's earlier specificity.

(For the record: In the same 1987 letter to Crain, Mansmann had also written that *three*, not two, agents were present in his office that day. In my view, this particular discrepancy is inconsequential and may be attributed to an inadvertent error, or a fading memory of a decades-old event. In every other written statement about the agents—at least those with which I am familiar—Mansmann reported that two men were present. Furthermore, to his credit, Mansmann, when recalling the filmed UFO encounter in his letter to Peter Bons, had candidly admitted that the "details would be sketchy and from memory." I think this is a very reasonable and telling comment. In all of his correspondence on the case, Mansmann never once attempted to portray his recollections as flawless or complete.)

Jacobs also noted Mansmann's apparent hedging regarding the affiliation of the men in civilian suits. During one of our 1995 telephone conversations, Bob sounded somewhat puzzled, saying, "At one time, [Mansmann] was openly referring to those guys as CIA. Nowadays, he calls them 'government agents.' I don't know what's going on there. Maybe he's decided not to openly talk about the CIA being involved."

Despite this remark, I suspect that Jacobs understood the reasons for Mansmann's guarded public posture regarding the "government men." A decade earlier, in his January 14, 1985, letter to Mansmann, he had written, "When Lee Graham tells me in a letter that you confirm the [warhead shoot-down] story but are 'reluctant to make any inquiry . . . for fear of reprisal from the agency that appropriated the film,' I shudder in my boots. . . . Over two decades after the filming of a 'warning shot,' must we still fear 'reprisal' for seeking answers to what may be the innermost secrets of the cosmos itself?"

Some critics of Mansmann's testimony, and the Big Sur case in general, doubt that the CIA would have had any jurisdiction over—or even much interest in—the alleged warhead shoot-down incident. These persons contend that the agency had only a peripheral, sporadic interest in UFOs over the years. They note that, at least officially, UFO investigations and policy decisions were almost always under U.S. Air Force jurisdiction. Therefore, these critics reason, the CIA would not have been directly involved in the Big Sur case in any manner.

In response to those who doubt that CIA agents would have been present in Mansmann's office—or who similarly contend that the CIA has never played a central role in the U.S. government's cover-up of UFOs—I will briefly mention a strikingly similar situation, occurring some two decades after Big Sur, in which another CIA-orchestrated suppression of UFO data has been alleged by an authoritative source.

John Callahan

John Callahan , a now-retired high-level administrator with the Federal Aviation Administration, is on the record regarding the CIA's direct and dominant role in an important UFO incident in November 1986.

While in Alaskan airspace, a Japanese Airlines pilot had sighted and tracked on radar a huge, walnut-shaped UFO as it maneuvered near his aircraft. Ground-based FAA and USAF radars also tracked the object for up to 31 minutes. When word of the remarkable encounter reached the press, it generated headlines worldwide.

The next day, according to Callahan, a small group of FBI and CIA employees and others unexpectedly arrived at FAA headquarters to be briefed on the sighting. During the meeting, "one of the guys from the CIA" ordered everyone present sworn to secrecy. The same individual also ordered the FAA to turn over its radar, air traffic voice communications, and written records relating to the incident—in the interests of national security. Despite this official order, Callahan more or less intentionally withheld some of the data on the case, which he later unapologetically released to researchers.

Callahan said that at one point during the meeting, after he had asked whether the secrecy relating to the sighting was actually warranted, the same CIA employee "got all excited" and told him that there would be no official acknowledgement of the UFO, given the potential for public panic.[9]

Although the officially nonexistent meeting at FAA headquarters occurred in November 1986, Callahan's statements bear more than a little similarity to the account provided by Mansmann, regarding the secret "CIA-attended" meeting at Vandenberg AFB in September 1964. Both men unequivocally report that the agency had confidently confiscated important UFO evidence, suggesting an official jurisdiction superseding the Air Force's own role, at least in these two incidents.

Given the specifics of Callahan's story, and considering his professional credibility—he had been the FAA's Division Chief of the Accidents and Investigations Branch—I accept the report he provides as credible. By extension, I must also respectfully disagree with those critics who contend that CIA-involvement in the Big Sur UFO incident can be automatically and indisputably ruled out. Considering the obvious national security implications relating to nuclear weapons testing, the agency's participation in the coverup of the UFO incident seems plausible, in my view.

Kingston George enters the picture

If Bob Jacobs's account regarding the Big Sur UFO incident is "all true," as Florenz Mansmann asserts, then it is arguably the most dramatic case on record of apparent UFO interference with one of our nuclear weapon systems. As

such, its importance cannot be overstated. While the actual motivation behind the apparent shooting down of the dummy warhead remains unknown—Jacobs has speculated that it was designed to convey displeasure over our possession of nuclear weapons—the act itself was nevertheless unmistakably provocative and, from a technological perspective, absolutely astounding.

But did the UFO encounter actually occur as Jacobs and Mansmann have portrayed?

In its Winter 1993 issue, *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine, published by the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP, but renamed in 2006 as the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry), featured an article entitled, "The Big Sur 'UFO': An *Identified* Flying Object," written by Kingston A. George.[10] In September 1964, George had been the project engineer for the experimental telescopic tracking and filming of Atlas missile launches at the Big Sur site. In that role he had worked directly with Jacobs. Therefore, one would think, George would be an authoritative source on the subject of the alleged events described by Jacobs and Mansmann. Indeed, he claims to be exactly that.

Given CSICOP's well-established position of debunking all UFO sightings, it is not too difficult to guess the tone of George's article. He begins by dismissing Jacobs's "weird claims" and then offers an alternate, prosaic explanation for the events captured on the film in question. In fact, George claims to know precisely what took place because, he says, he viewed the film himself.

George maintains that the payload atop the Atlas missile was an experimental enemy radar-defeating system designed to release six simulated warheads—decoys—in addition to the unarmed dummy warhead. According to George, when Jacobs viewed the film of the test, he had inexplicably mistaken one of these decoys for the "UFO."

George then notes that had this test (and similar ones) been successful, the use of simulated warheads might effectively confuse Soviet missile defenses, in the event of nuclear conflict between the superpowers. In principle, the Russians' radar-guided antimissile missiles would fail to identify the genuine warhead among the decoys, thereby greatly increasing the odds that it would escape destruction and reach its intended target in the Soviet Union.

Elsewhere in his *SI* article, George contends that the four flashes of light described by Jacobs (who had called them "beams of energy") were actually momentary luminous bursts or "blooms" on the Image Orthicon's extremely light-sensitive screen. According to George, there were only three blooms. A bright exhaust plume created the first, as the Reentry Vehicle separated from the Atlas's sustainer tank. The second and third blooms, he says, were caused by the small explosive charges used to release the decoys from the tank.

Telescope crew at Big Sur. Kingston A. George is in sunglasses pointing at camera, Maj. Florenz Mansmann is standing at center left.

Consequently, George claims, Jacobs simply misinterpreted the objects and events he saw on the film screened in Mansmann's office. He asserts that everything related to the ICBM launch is reasonably explained without invoking Jacobs's "weird" scenario involving aliens from outer space.

After dismissing Jacobs's basic contention of UFO interference with the experimental warhead test, George then alleges other "fundamental flaws" in the former lieutenant's article. For example, George says that Jacobs incorrectly referred to the Atlas missile's trajectory as "orbital," meaning that it was programmed to circle the Earth. In reality, writes George, the flight was suborbital. This point is apparently designed to raise questions about Jacobs's basic understanding of the launch and test.

Actually, it is George who has it wrong: He has misquoted Jacobs! Nowhere in the *MUFON UFO Journal* article does Jacobs refer to the missile's flight as being orbital. On the contrary, regarding the events immediately following the four flashes of light observed emanating from the UFO, Jacobs writes, "Subsequently, the warhead malfunctioned and tumbled out of *suborbit* [my emphasis] hundreds of miles short of its target." Elsewhere in the article, he refers to the missile's "suborbital capsule." However, Jacobs does state that the UFO "flew a relative polar orbit around our warhead," which is undoubtedly the source of George's misquote.

In addition to this error, George also misrepresents another of Jacobs's key statements. After accurately noting that Jacobs had referred to the UFO directing "a beam of energy" at the dummy warhead, George goes on to claim that Jacobs had referred to the luminous ray as "a laser beam." George then says, quite correctly, that a laser beam would not be visible in space, which is essentially where the warhead was at the time of the incident.

The problem is this: Jacobs never actually referred to the UFO's four beams of light as laser beams. He did say, however, that after he viewed the film in Mansmann's office, the major had ordered him to call the beams "flashes from [USAF] laser tracking," should anyone ever ask Jacobs about the incident.

So George has regrettably misquoted Jacobs yet again. Considering this inattentive, highly misleading critique in *Skeptical Inquirer*, I feel compelled to emphasize the point: Bob Jacobs, in his *MUTUAL UFO Journal* article, referred to each of the four luminous pulses as "a beam of energy, possibly a plasma beam." Most plasmas, depending on their density, are indeed visible in space—the aurora borealis, for example, or the ionized atmosphere that envelops the Space Shuttle as it returns to Earth.

If—I say if—the beams of light described by Jacobs (and Mansmann) were discharges from a plasma-based, directed-energy weapon, they would very likely be visible on film, just as the two former officers have reported. Regardless, George's inaccurate version of Jacobs' admittedly speculative statements concerning the beams is unacceptable.

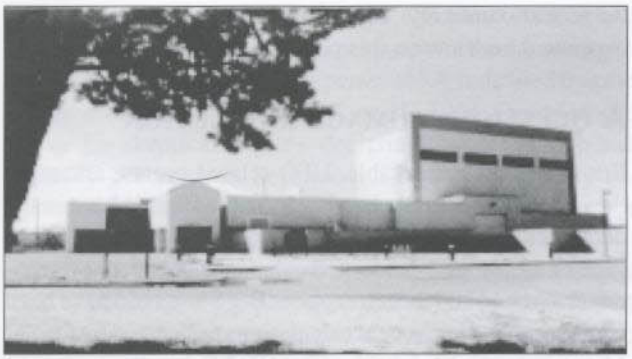
(In the interest of fairness, I will note here that Jacobs has acknowledged certain factual errors in his own 1989 article. For example, he estimated that the missile's nose cone had separated at 60 nautical miles altitude, whereas the actual altitude was apparently 200 nautical miles. Similarly, he had initially gauged the warhead's velocity at the time of the UFO encounter at 18,000 mph. In a subsequent interview, however, he more accurately estimated it was traveling between 11,000 and 14,000 mph. Declassified data confirm that the nose-cone separation occurred at just under 11,000 mph. Jacobs and Mansmann agree that the shoot-down event took place shortly thereafter.)

On the subject of the "beams of light" reportedly released by the UFO, I recently asked Jacobs to elaborate on his brief, published description of them. After a thoughtful pause, he responded, "I wouldn't want to say that they looked like lightning bolts, but the appearance was similar. They definitely didn't look like a laser beam would, say in a laboratory experiment. There was an extremely bright flash, coming from just below the cupola on the object. From the center of the flash there was a luminous beam, or bolt, extending all the way from the UFO to the warhead. That happened four times, as the object circled the warhead. That's the best way to describe what we saw."

In this instance, Jacobs was not only referring to the images he and Mansmann saw during the restricted screening of the film, but also to one tiny feature discovered during Mansmann's enhanced optical analysis of the footage: Jacobs had personally observed the beams' general appearance on film; however, when he describes each beam originating from just below the UFO's "cupola" or dome, he is reporting on a detail later provided to him by Mansmann.

Despite some critics' claims to the contrary, there is nothing physically impossible about the warhead being bumped out of its programmed trajectory, as reported. The scientific principle governing the modification of an object's direction in space when subjected to an outside force is well understood. The UFO's beam-release, as described by Jacobs and Mansmann in their private letters and published statements, would appear to be this kind of event. Each of the former officers reports observing on film four beams of light being directed at the warhead, after which it tumbled out of suborbit.

Of course, nudging a nuclear warhead out of its intended trajectory—or even destroying it—with a plasma beam is beyond our current capabilities. Nevertheless, there apparently has been extensive but classified research relating to the latter, using a directed-energy weapon, albeit one based on the ground, not in space. In 2001, the authoritative



Aerospace Engineering Facility at Kirtland AFB, constructed in 1996 by Phillips Laboratory.

Jane's Defence Weekly featured a story saying that such a project had been initiated by the U.S. Air Force over a decade ago, and further noted that the research may have continued on a covert basis after the project's official termination.

Referring to the USAF's highly secret Phillips Laboratory (now the Air Force Research Laboratory's Space Vehicles Directorate at Kirtland), *JDW's* aerospace consultant Nick Cook wrote, "In the early 1990s, the U.S. Air Force was preparing tests at Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico, designed to lead to a ground-based plasma-weapon in the late 1990s capable of firing plasma bullets at incoming ballistic missile warheads. The enabling technology was a 'fast capacitor bank' called Shiva Star that could store 10 million joules of energy and release it instantaneously. Officials anticipated firing bullets at 3,000 km/sec in 1995 and 10,000 km/sec—3% of the speed of light—by the turn of the century.... Dumped into the 'soft' electronics of a re-entry vehicle, the bullets were envisaged as destroying multiple manoeuvring warheads at rapid reacquisition rates. By the second half of the last decade, the Shiva/plasma bullet programme was officially dropped. Observers have remarked on how its sudden disappearance at the time the firing tests were scheduled was redolent of a transition to the classified environment."[11]

Therefore, while the composition of the beams of light described by Jacobs and Mansmann remains unknown, it's possible that efforts are underway at present to develop our own plasma-based, directed-energy weapons. Even if the Air Force program described above was not shifted to the Black Project realm, but was discontinued as officially announced, it nevertheless seems that such weapons have been seriously investigated by the U.S. military as a means to bring down incoming nuclear warheads.

If the Big Sur UFO incident occurred as portrayed by Jacobs and Mansmann, then it would appear that someone (or something) else, vastly ahead of us technologically, has already achieved this type of shoot-down capability. Jacobs has speculated that those responsible for the act somehow let a few of our military leaders in on their little secret in advance, and anticipated the subsequent filming of the event. I disagree with this particular contention and consider

the scenario unlikely. To my knowledge, Mansmann never expressed his view on this possibility.

A QUESTION OF IMAGE RESOLUTION

But would the remarkable, UFO-related events, assuming they occurred, actually be visible on the film, at least in the detail described by Jacobs and Mansmann? After all, at the time of the alleged incident, the distance between the separated warhead and the telescope at Big Sur would have been significant. Indeed, recent calculations performed by former Minuteman missile launch officer Bob Salas, at my request, suggest that the nose-cone separation occurred some 470 nautical miles *from the camera*.[12] Jacobs had earlier estimated that the UFO made its appearance several seconds, perhaps more than a minute, after the warhead itself separated from the nose cone—"as we neared the end of the camera run."

Published Atlas launch data indicate that the nose-cone-separation event occurs at 5.3 minutes (T+320 seconds), at which point the nose-cone package is 475 nautical miles *downrange*, and 200 nautical miles in altitude.[13] Bob Salas used these data—as well as the geographical coordinates of the launch site, the telescope site, and the intended splashdown site—to trigonometrically derive the approximate distance between Big Sur and the nose-cone release. The mathematical result is obviously an estimate, given that the nose-cone package at the point of its separation from the missile launcher was traveling at nearly 11,000 mph (about 3 miles per second).

So, given these data, and quantitative estimates, would the alleged shoot-down incident be visible on film? Kingston George claims that *all* the objects at that distance—the warhead, the radar experiment, the nose cone, even the alleged UFO—would have appeared only as mere specks of glinting sunlight, due to an effect known as "specular reflection."

Actually, Jacobs has partially substantiated this assertion. In a letter to researcher T. Scott Crain Jr., dated July 25, 1986, Jacobs wrote that when he viewed the film in Mansmann's office, the UFO had appeared only as a rapidly-maneuvering "small point of light." However, he also wrote, "Mansmann, who inspected the film with a magnifier, says that the object was saucer-shaped with a dome on top."[14]

As noted earlier, Mansmann confirms this statement and has written, "The shape was [a] classic disc, the center seemed to be a raised bubble . . . the entire lower saucer shape . . . was glowing and seemed to be rotating slowly. At the point of beam release—if it was a beam, it, the object, turned like an object required to be in a position to fire from a platform."

Therefore, according to Mansmann, a thorough analysis of the anomalous point of light, utilizing a simple form of image enlargement, had confirmed that it was a bona fide UFO and revealed some degree of detail relating to both its structure and movement. While Kingston George may claim that no such detail would be visible in any object at that distance, Mansmann has clearly and repeatedly stated otherwise. Although the incident almost certainly occurred hundreds of miles beyond the point at which the nose cone separated from the missile—the exact distance may never be known—Mansmann has been specific and steadfast in his description of the UFO's appearance on film.

Regarding the object's dimensions, Mansmann wrote, "Telescopic photography of that magnitude makes sizes indeterminable. We knew the missile size but could not compare [that with the UFO] since we did not know how far from the missile the 'object' was at time of beam release."[15]

It is worth noting that when Mansmann screened the film in 1964, he already possessed extensive observational and photo-interpretation experience. As he later told Curt Collier, "By the time of this missile launch, I was a trained officer in Aerial Observation and a Combat Radar Navigator in World War II, a Director of Operations for the Ground Observer Corps during the Korean and Cold War conflicts, a trained Aerial Reconnaissance Officer . . . and photo interpreter for clandestine operations for three years during the Berlin Airlifts."[16] Considering these facts, one would think that Mansmann, who had reviewed the film in question at least three times, would be capable of distinguishing between a featureless, twinkling speck of light, and a "classic disc" UFO with a dome.

Significantly, Kingston George's assessment of the Big Sur telescope's design performance is also a matter of record. Bob Jacobs's 1989 *MUFON UFO Journal* article cites an official 1964 USAF report written by George, in which he had described the then-experimental telescope/camera system's capabilities. As the project engineer, George stated that one of the goals of the filming was to record "minute events following propellant depletion—at distances of from 300 to 800 nautical miles."[17]

However, in his 1993 *Skeptical Inquirer* article, George seems to downplay his earlier, official assessment of the system's resolution at that range. Given his published comments pertaining to specular reflection, he now appears to contend that while various "minute events" related to the launches were indeed visible at great distances, the missile components themselves would have appeared only as points of light, exhibiting no discernable detail.

Regardless, George's more recent, apparently more modest portrayal of the telescope's capabilities is strikingly contradicted by photo-interpretation expert Florenz Mansmann's contemporary and detailed assessment of the anomalous object captured on film. Once again, in his letter to Peter Bons, the retired major wrote that, given the UFO's domed-disc shape and amazing performance, "the assumption was, at that time, extraterrestrial."

I recently asked Jacobs to elaborate upon his earlier published comments relating to the number and type of objects visible in the field of view just before and during the shoot-down event. He responded, "We saw the nose cone

separate and open up—it looked like an alligator's open jaws. We saw the experiment, which was metallic chaff, come out. We saw the dummy warhead come out and inject into a different [trajectory]. All of the other components, the chaff and so on, were all still flying along. They don't lose altitude all that quickly because of momentum. So, there were several objects visible when the UFO came into view."[18]

This description suggests that at the time of nose-cone separation—some 470 nautical miles from the telescope—certain of the ICBM's structural components were clearly visible, including the nose cone's two halves, as they split apart. However, by the time the UFO approached and circled the dummy warhead, the unidentified object appeared, at least on film, only as a "small point of light." Presumably, the warhead itself was minuscule as well. Mansmann has alluded to the difficulties involved in size-determination at those distances, but if we assume the UFO was at least 30 feet in diameter, the 11-foot-long Reentry Vehicle, containing the dummy warhead, would have appeared relatively smaller—unless the UFO was maneuvering well beyond the RV, from the camera's point-of-view. I think, however, the circling motion described by both Jacobs and Mansmann suggests that the object was fairly close to the warhead.

Regardless, the exact distance from the telescope to the alleged shoot-down event is unknown, at least by those in ufology who have researched the question. Therefore, in my opinion, it is presumptuous for anyone to suggest that there currently exists—at least in the public domain—an unassailable, absolutely quantifiable solution to the image-size issue. Having said that, Bob Salas's mathematical work does provide a reasonable estimate regarding the distance between the telescope and the missile, at the time of nose-cone separation. Once again, according to Jacobs and Mansmann, this routine event occurred shortly before the appearance of the UFO.

The Actual Date of the Incident

Arguably the single most crucial "fact" mentioned by George in his *Skeptical Inquirer* article is the date of the missile launch. He unequivocally says it took place on September 22, 1964. This assertion is central to his case because he claims to have personally screened the film of *that particular launch* and, therefore, claims to know exactly what it showed. Consequently, says George, he can confidently rule-out Jacobs's (and Mansmann's) controversial interpretation of the objects and events captured on film.

But what if George is wrong about the date of the launch described by Jacobs and Mansmann? Suppose he has inadvertently—I won't say intentionally—selected another Atlas launch during that time frame as the basis for his uncompromising, debunking commentary? Remarkably, published evidence now seems to confirm that this is indeed the case.

In his article in the *MUFON UFO Journal*, Jacobs had written that, although he could not pinpoint the exact date of the launch, information in his personal log indicated that the likely date was September 2, 3, or 15, 1964. Once George wrote his skeptical article—declaring that the launch had actually occurred on September 22—Jacobs quickly responded by saying that his log suggested that he was not even present at the Big Sur telescope site on that date.[19]

Furthermore, Jacobs had also candidly acknowledged that he could not remember the exact model of Atlas ICBM used to launch the enemy radar-defeating experiment and dummy warhead. While he thought that it had been an Atlas F, he admitted that it might have been an Atlas D.

In an effort to establish the actual launch date and type of missile involved, I wrote to Mark Wade, at Encyclopedia Astronautica (EA), and asked that he provide me with records relating to all Atlas launches at Vandenberg AFB during September 1964. Wade replied that while there was no record of an Atlas F being launched that month, there were two launches attributed to Atlas D's:

1964 Sep 15 - 15:27 GMT - **ABRES LORV-3 re-entry vehicle test flight** Vandenberg Launch Pad: 576A1 – Launch Vehicle: Atlas D 245D.

1964 Sep 22 - 13:08 GMT - **NTMP KX-19 Target mission** Vandenberg Launch Pad: 576A3 - Launch Vehicle: Atlas D 247D.

(The abridged summaries provided by Wade are derived from lengthier references published by EA—and are based on Commander's Launch Reports and other USAF records.)[20]

Upon receiving this information, the first thing that caught my eye was the launch on September 15, 1964. When I informed Jacobs about the published data, he responded, "Well, Robert, I think you've found the launch. The timing is exactly right [according to my personal records]. The date, September 15th, is one of the three I mentioned. I never believed the launch took place on September 22nd, which is what George keeps saying. The stated mission of that launch had nothing to do with the experiment we were doing the day of the incident. We were testing a reentry vehicle, just as [the published summary] says."

(The records published by EA state that the September 15 launch occurred at 15:27 Greenwich Mean Time, or 8:27 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time. In other words, it occurred in daylight, just as Jacobs remembered. In his 1989 article, he had mentioned his first glimpse of the ascending Atlas's fiery exhaust, as the missile "leaped through the snow-white coastal fog blanket" shrouding Vandenberg AFB, some 100 nautical miles southeast of the telescope site at Big Sur.)

The EA entries cited above indicate that the September 15 launch was designated an "ABRES LORV-3 re-entry vehicle test flight." These cumbersome acronyms translate to "Advanced Ballistic Reentry System" and "Low Observable Reentry Vehicle." In plain English, this is *precisely* the

(continued on page 20)

BIG SUR—*continued from page 11*

type of test described by Bob Jacobs all along. The Air Force had hoped that the warhead, within the RV, would be difficult to distinguish from the cloud of metallic chaff—aluminum foil strips—accompanying it through space. If this test was successful, the experimental system might defeat an enemy's radar, by effectively rendering invisible the incoming nuclear warhead.

According to Encyclopedia Astronautica, the September 22 launch—the one picked by George—was designated an "NTMP KX-19 Target" mission, which means Nike Target Missile Program, flight number KX-19. As I was to later learn, unlike the earlier test on September 15, which was designed to evaluate the experimental Reentry Vehicle itself, the purpose of the target test was to determine whether the U.S. Army group on Kwajalein Atoll would be able to track the RV on radar. It was hoped—if such tests were successful—that incoming Soviet warheads might be targeted with Nike antimissile missiles.

This distinction seemed clear enough; however, because Jacobs had written that the test disrupted by the UFO had been "in support of our Nike-Zeus objectives," I needed to be certain that the September 22 "Nike Target" mission refer-

IMAGE RESOLUTION OF THE OPTICAL SYSTEM AT BIG SUR

by Mark Rodeghier

Robert Hastings correctly notes this key question: "But would the remarkable, UFO-related events, assuming they occurred, actually be visible on the film, at least in the detail described by Jacobs and Mansmann?" This is one of the central points of contention raised by skeptics, including Kingston George himself (see Hastings's note 10).

Fortunately, the question can be answered because George supplies the mirror size of the telescope used at Big Sur, and because well-known optical principles govern image resolution. George reports, "The 24-inch mirror telescope we borrowed was built in the 1950s . . . by Boston University under government contract."

The size of a telescope's mirror determines its resolution, which can be defined as the ability to separate two point-like sources of light. Consider a double star system. If a telescope (or your eye) can see only one point of light, then the two stars are unresolved. If both stars can be seen separately, then the stars are resolved.

Resolution is a complex issue when sources other than distant lights are being viewed, but becomes simpler when a situation basically mirrors that in astronomy, where an object's real size is much, much less than its distance from the telescope.

The resolution of a telescope is well approximated by the Rayleigh formula, which is based on diffraction. The governing equation is:

$$\text{Resolution (in radians)} = 1.22\lambda / D$$

where λ is the wavelength and D is the size of the mirror.

Using a wavelength of 550 nanometers, typical of sunlight, and substituting 0.61 meters for D, yields a theoretical resolution of 0.23 arcseconds.

Next we must determine the effective size, in arcseconds, of the missile or UFO at the distance they were filmed. Based on Robert Salas's calculations, we can use an approximate distance of 600 nautical miles. (It turns out that altering this by a factor of 20% or so won't make an appreciable difference in the result.) I won't trouble with listing the formula for angular diameter/angular size, but simply present the result for an object 10 meters in size (the estimated diameter of the UFO).

At 600 nautical miles, an object 10 meters in size subtends about 1.86 arcseconds. This is much larger than the resolution limit of 0.23 arcseconds of the 24-inch telescope being used to capture images of the launch. What this means in plain English is that, under good conditions, the system used at Big Sur should have easily been able to see an object 10 meters in size as a separate object. The general shape of the object should also have been discernable.

This result also suggests that objects just a few meters apart could have been resolved as separate by the optical system. That this was the capability of the system seems consistent with George's own commentary. As he notes, "we not only could see and gather data on the missile anomalies as hoped, but we also were viewing details of the warhead separation and decoy deployment that were considered by the air force to be highly classified."

There are two caveats to this analysis. First, the Rayleigh resolution is theoretical and is not reached except under the most exceptional viewing conditions. Effective resolution at mountain sites like Big Sur typically varies from 0.50 to 1.0 arcsecond. Even then, an object 10 meters in diameter could be resolved by the telescope.

The second is the nature of the film system recording the output from the telescope. The system filmed the image off an Image Orthicon screen, and if the screen had lower resolution than the input from the telescope, some detail would be lost.

All the same, the system would still be able to see (resolve) an object circling the missile in flight, unless it was very close (less than a few dozen meters). Bright pulses of light from the object to the warhead should also have been visible.

This analysis, based on standard optical principles, and information supplied by Kingston George, thus generally supports the observations and testimony of Jacobs and Mansmann.

enced in EA was not the actual launch after all. At first glance, one might interpret the wording of Jacobs's "Nike-Zeus" statement as a reference to the launch discussed by Kingston George. Therefore, I challenged Jacobs on this point, asking him if he were absolutely certain that the later launch—the Nike target test—was not the launch in question.

Jacobs's response was emphatic, "No, we were testing the RV itself. It was not a target test." He then elaborated, "There were several interesting aspects of the anti-missile-missile tests. This particular one involved a dummy warhead and a bunch of radar-deflecting aluminum chaff. The dummy warhead was targeted to splashdown at Eniwetok Lagoon. . . . As far as I know Kwajalein [played no part in this test] aside from radar tracking. There was no planned Nike launch [involved with it]."[21]

Given this unequivocal statement, the question remains: Did George select and discuss the *same* missile test described by both Jacobs and Mansmann? The entries in Jacobs's original mission log, as well as the now-available data published by Encyclopedia Astronautica, appear to indicate that he did not, thus negating much of the force of George's critique.

Odd omission

Significantly, in his *Skeptical Inquirer* article, Kingston George devotes not a single word to Florenz Mansmann's unreserved endorsement of Jacobs's published account of the Big Sur UFO incident. Perhaps George was unaware that, by the time he wrote his debunking article in *SI*, Mansmann had already admitted to several people that Jacobs's account was factual.

I wished to ask George about this odd oversight, and other issues, so I telephoned him in January 2003. At the outset, I candidly admitted that I fully accepted Jacobs's and Mansmann's virtually identical accounts regarding the UFO incident. I also said that I was seeking a few details and clarifications relating to his side of the story. Finally, I asked George if he had ever read, or at least heard about, Mansmann's published comments on the case.

George claimed to have no knowledge of Mansmann's endorsement of the reality of the UFO encounter. I then briefly summarized various supportive statements Mansmann had made over the years and asked George to explain the retired major's unwavering support for Jacobs, if in fact his account was merely a fabrication or flight of fancy. He responded, "I think [Mansmann] did that out of largesse."[22] In other words, according to George, Dr. Florenz Mansmann—a distinguished retired U.S. Air Force officer and Indiana University–educated biomedical researcher—casually risked his military and scientific reputation by knowingly and repeatedly endorsing Jacobs's "weird claims" out of the goodness of his heart.

Is the "largesse" scenario offered by George plausible? I think not.

Although a number of George's published statements about the Big Sur case are at best misleading, they still conceivably represent an attempt to present an honest difference of opinion with Bob Jacobs. Regardless, the fundamental point to be made is that George has apparently chosen the *wrong launch mission* upon which to base his extensive, debunking commentary. If this is indeed the case—and it seems very probable, based on Jacobs's private records as well as now-published technical data—then many of George's errors understandably follow from his original misstep. However, there is another relevant fact relating to the publication of his article which requires examination.

Another nuclear weapons connection

Factual errors aside, George's *Skeptical Inquirer* article goes well beyond the mere presentation of contrary views and straightforward debate. Quite clearly, the article was designed to disparage Jacobs's basic credibility and to deride his so-called "weird claims" regarding the notion of UFO-interference with the nuclear weapons–related test.

I consider it noteworthy that George's article was published in CSICOP's *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine. At first glance, this is hardly surprising, given CSICOP's tireless crusade to discredit UFOs. However, because the Big Sur incident reportedly involved a UFO disabling—*shooting down*—one of the U.S. military's experimental nuclear warhead systems, *Skeptical Inquirer*'s obvious endorsement of George's attempted debunking of the incident is particularly interesting.

Why? The executive editor of *Skeptical Inquirer* is Kendrick C. Frazier. Some years ago, I discovered that Frazier has been employed, since the early 1980s, as a public relations specialist by Sandia National Laboratories, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Sandia Labs has been instrumental to the success of America's nuclear weapons program since the late 1940s, through its "ordinance engineering" of components for bomb and missile warhead systems.

Frazier's affiliation with Sandia Labs is relevant, given the numerous references in declassified government docu-

Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque.

ments and in the statements of former military personnel—including Bob Jacobs—relating to UFO sightings at nuclear weapons development, testing, and deployment sites over the past six decades. As I noted in my introduction, these startling incidents have been reported at every major U.S. nukes lab, including Sandia, and at ICBM sites, including Atlas missile silos at Walker AFB in 1964, the very year the Big Sur incident occurred.

Considering these disclosures—which clearly establish a link between UFOs and nuclear weapons—I find it interesting, to say the least, that the longtime editor of the leading debunking magazine—whose pages routinely feature articles discrediting UFOs and those who report them—should be employed as a public relations spokesman by one of the leading nuclear weapons labs in the United States.

Perhaps significantly, *Skeptical Inquirer's* publisher's statement, which appears at the beginning of each issue, fails to mention Frazier's employment at the highly secretive, government-funded laboratory. Instead, the magazine merely lists his profession as "science writer"—a reference to his having written several books and articles on various scientific subjects. One major online biography on Frazier also fails to mention his Sandia Labs connection.[23]

On the other hand, I have found a few, mostly obscure references to his work at Sandia. Regardless, as I have discovered, most scientists, at least those attending my UFO lectures at colleges and universities, are unaware of Frazier's day job. This is equally true for ufologists.

Over the years, Frazier has been quick to dismiss the astonishing revelations about UFOs contained in government documents declassified via the Freedom of Information Act. He claims that researchers who have accessed thousands of U.S. Air Force, CIA, and FBI files have consistently misrepresented their contents. In one interview he stated, "The UFO believers don't give you a clear and true idea of what these government documents reveal. They exaggerate the idea that there is a big UFO cover-up."[24]

Just as Frazier strives to minimize the significance of the declassified revelations about UFOs, it is likely he will also attempt to downplay the relevance of his job with one of the U.S. government's top nuclear weapons labs, as it pertains to his magazine's relentless debunking of UFOs. He will presumably assert that his skeptical views on the subject are personal and sincere, and are in no way related to, or influenced by, his public relations position at Sandia National Laboratories.

However, regardless of his response, I believe that Frazier's employment at Sandia is very relevant, and raises questions about his impartiality, if nothing else, when he publishes stridently anti-UFO articles such as those featured in *Skeptical Inquirer*—including the one written by Kingston George.

For his part, CSICOP's chief UFO debunker, the late Philip J. Klass, aggressively hounded Jacobs after he published the warhead shoot-down story, going so far as to write a derisive letter to Jacobs's department chairman—Dr. R. Steven Craig, Department of Journalism and Broadcasting, University of Maine—in which Klass accusingly questioned professor Jacobs's fitness as a representative of the academic community.

Jacobs's understandably indignant response to Klass, entitled "Low Klass: A Rejoinder," may be found online.[25] It is a must-read for anyone wishing to understand the behind-the-scenes battle that ensued after Jacobs went public with the UFO incident.

Among other subjects, the rejoinder touches on acrimonious correspondence between Jacobs and Klass. At one point, Jacobs had apparently asked the debunker for character references. Klass responded by citing Admiral Bobby Ray Inman (USN Ret.), the former director of the National Security Agency who also held deputy director positions at both the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency; and Lt. General Daniel O. Graham (USA Ret.), the former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency and former deputy director of the CIA. Klass not only provided Jacobs with their names, but home addresses as well, and told him, "Both men have worked with me and gotten to know me in my efforts for *Aviation Week*."

The character references provided by Klass are certainly interesting. Jacobs took them as veiled threats and wrote, "Put yourself in my position now. I had published an article charging that the CIA, or some other secret agency of the government, had been instrumental in covering up the documenting of a UFO, that I had been ordered to be part of a coverup in connection with that incident, and had now written about it. Then, along comes some chipmunk demanding that I turn over material to him and referring me to Bobby Inman and Daniel Graham to soothe my anxiety! The last outfit in the world to which I would turn for verification of a source or the legitimacy of a UFO 'researcher' [Klass] would be the CIA!"

Jacobs then reports on his response to Klass's demands: "I contacted my attorney immediately, and he advised me to have nothing to do with Klass or any of his people, since they might be trying to set me up for some sort of violation. In a letter dated April 3, 1989, I told Mr. Klass politely to go away and leave me alone, as follows:

> On advice of counsel and with all due respect, I am declining your offer. I have nothing which belongs to you, I have nothing to which you are entitled by rights and I don't like feeling pressured.
>
> My article in the MUFON JOURNAL [sic] says all that I have to say about the incident at Big Sur. The pertinent part of the Kingston George report was quoted only to prove that there was a malfunction during the period of time during which the B.U. telescope was at Big Sur and that the B.U. telescope was certified to have recorded it. This proof was necessary to refute the earlier assertion by the Air Force that there was not even a launch, much less a malfunction recorded by the B.U.

telescope. I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised by this denial since the Air Force also denied earlier that there had ever been a Lieutenant Robert Jacobs![25]

Conclusions

The crucial source testimony relating to the Big Sur UFO Incident has been explicit, detailed, and steadfast. While Bob Jacobs readily concedes that certain of his recollections involve reconstructions and estimates, the basic narrative he presents has remained intact, nearly 25 years after it was first published, in the face of often withering criticism and indefensible insult.

Importantly, there exists a second, highly credible source. Florenz Mansmann has repeatedly and unequivocally endorsed Jacobs's account as being "all true as presented." Moreover, because Mansmann's photo-interpretation tasks at Vandenberg AFB involved his expert evaluation of the films of Vandenberg's missile tests, he was the perfect person to analyze the objects and events recorded during the launch in question. His own assessment of the UFO incident is direct and unapologetic: A domed-disc—an extraterrestrial spacecraft—maneuvered near one of our dummy nuclear warheads and shot it down with four beams of directed-energy.

In 1964, when the incident occurred, such a claim, even by a distinguished USAF officer, would have seemed deluded or, at best, a bizarre science fictional fantasy. Think Buck Rogers and death rays. However, by 2001, a respected military-affairs journal could report that the U.S. government had once undertaken—and might still be covertly pursuing—research relating to shooting down incoming nuclear warheads with directed-energy beams.

If the account provided by Jacobs and Mansmann is indeed factual, as I believe, it is understandable why the U.S. military would wish to keep the Big Sur UFO incident secret. At a minimum, we are discussing the existence of vastly superior, saucer-shaped craft, capable of pacing and disabling our nuclear warheads in space. A confirmation of the event would effectively be an official acknowledgement of our potential strategic vulnerability. For this reason, if no other, the Pentagon will never admit the reality of the incident. Furthermore, regardless of its actual purpose, many American citizens would view the shoot-down act as hostile, thereby greatly complicating any official announcement of its occurrence.

More important, official verification of the warhead shoot-down would represent an irreversible admission of extraterrestrial visitation, simply because the technology reportedly involved was vastly beyond human achievement in 1964, and undoubtedly remains so at present.

The fact that some of Jacobs's and Mansmann's harshest critics were or are themselves engaged in classified research or public relations tasks in support of the U.S. government's nuclear weapons program is arguably noteworthy in any meaningful examination of this case. Perhaps these persons have sincerely expressed their skeptical opinions, but there is also another possible explanation: Debate is one thing but disinformation is quite another. In my view, the boundary between the two has been blurred during the discussion of this particular UFO incident.

The UFO/Nukes Connection has been confirmed by both declassified U.S. government documents and credible military witness testimony, including that provided by former ICBM launch and targeting officers. As noted, over the years, a number of those officers have reported instances of missile malfunctions occurring just as UFOs were observed maneuvering near or hovering above launch-related facilities. I consider this testimony to be important and compelling, and pertinent to our review of the events at Vandenberg AFB, in September 1964.

Whatever UFOs are, whatever their origin, whatever the purpose of their presence may be, it appears that those who presumably pilot these craft are interested in our nuclear weapons—for whatever reason—and have occasionally interfered with their functionality. Regarding the Big Sur UFO incident in particular, the question is whether those who have seemingly shut down nuclear missiles poised in underground silos have also shot one out of the sky. In my view, the daring testimony of Bob Jacobs and Florenz Mansmann convincingly suggests this is indeed the case.

Notes

1. See www.nicap.org/bigsur2.htm.
2. Edward J. Ruppelt, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956), p. 155.
3. www.nicap.org/babylon/missile_incidents.htm.
4. Florenz Mansmann to Lee Graham, personal communication, January 30, 1983.
5. Florenz Mansmann to Peter Bons, personal communication, March 8, 1983.
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