

The document

Not many readers of *IUR* can have missed the "MJ-12 document" controversy. The MJ-12 document, for those of you who were vacationing in Afghanistan and missed all the excitement, purports to be a National Security Council briefing prepared for President-elect Eisenhower on November 18, 1952. It claims that on two occasions extraterrestrial UFOs crashed in the Southwest, leaving not only hardware but, in the first instance (at Roswell, New Mexico), four alien bodies. "Operation Majestic 12" is described as a "TOP SECRET Research and Development/Intelligence operation responsible directly and only to the President of the United States." Its dozen members, high-ranking intelligence, military and scientific personnel, all participated in aspects of the recovery investigation. The most unexpected name among them is that of Donald H. Menzel, the Harvard University astronomer who wrote three UFO-debunking books.

The Document arrived one day in December 1984, in an envelope with no return address, at the home of Jaime Shandera, an associate of William Moore, best known for his exhaustive probing into the Roswell event. (See his article on the subject in the July/August 1986 issue of *IUR*.) Two and a half years later, on May 29 of this year, after Moore and Shandera were reasonably satisfied of the Document's authenticity, they released it to the media and the UFO community -- to an explosive response.

During the summer the MJ-12 story was all over the place: the *New York Times*, the *London Observer*, the press services, ABC-TV's *Nightline* and 20/20. Ma Bell's stock shot up as ufologists called each other, government agencies, retired officials and anybody else who might conceivably know something, to ask them the same question a prominent reporter for one of America's major newspapers asked me: "Do you think this could possibly be true?"

Well, could it? In July I participated in the Ma Bell-enrichment program by phoning all over the country to talk with researchers whose judgments I trust and who are more knowledgeable than I in the intricacies of official involvement in UFO study. I also reexamined documents and sought out information about the history of intelligence agencies in the years immediately following World War II (or, at that period is known to ufologists, the Arnold era). For a few naive moments I actually thought I could get, if not to the bottom, at least close enough to have a pretty good idea of what might lie there.



Jerome Clark

I would like to tell you I was successful, but the truth is that, as I write these words in early August, I am more confused than I was when I started. I envy those who have managed already to arrive at firm conclusions and hold to them. So far my firmest conclusions have the distressing habit of disintegrating within 24 hours.

Most informed ufologists are in the camp of the disbelievers, I learned early on, and their position is easy to understand, and entirely defensible. After all, a lot of phony documents have been circulating in recent years and there is good reason to be suspicious. Moreover, as ufologists have grown ever more sophisticated (and cautious) in their evaluation of documents, the phony documents have in turn become ever more clever. Brad Sparks declares the MJ-12 document "a complete hoax...one of the best I've ever seen" -- and "completely predictable." Several ufologists have even named a suspect, an active-duty intelligence officer who has been linked to a number of fake documents supposedly revealing dramatic government UFO secrets.

Yet even the skeptics concede that, whereas other documents are demonstrably false, they are not *certainly* the Document is bogus. Even they admit, albeit only when pressed, to being intrigued and they grant the possibility, however slight in their estimation, that it may be just what it says it is.

In my informal poll I found only two ufologists who are flat-out convinced (or, more precisely, "90-percent convinced," as each told me independently): Moore and Stanton Friedman. (Shandera, who is also convinced, does not consider himself a ufologist.) Moore and Friedman, of course, are most intimately involved in the affair, but in some fundamentally different ways.

Moore, for example, says he is in regular contact with individuals in the intelligence community and these persons have told him essentially the same story the MJ-12 document tells (plus a great deal more). Shandera has also met these people, we are told, but Friedman has not, presumably because he lives on the other side of the North American continent from his associates.

Moore has been much less than forthcoming about his sources and his information, leading critics to charge that, whatever his intentions, he has become for all practical purposes

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theoretical possibilities for other life forms. One characteristic of the human form of life is negative entropy; with an external energy force it can homogenize rather than disperse. This characteristic might be examined in quantum experiments. The thesis of an observer-created reality could be used to hypothesize that UFOs may be created by humans. If the speed of light is not limiting, it might be possible to transfer information across the universe instantaneously. Thus the UFO phenomenon might represent a form of information transfer.

Oberg's *New Scientist* essay concludes, "...if any of the claims of ufology prove valid it would indeed rate as a major scientific breakthrough, perhaps one of the most important...." True. When the Condon Committee says of one of the cases it investigated that "all factors...geometric, psychological, and physical appear to be consistent with the assertion that an extraordinary flying object, silvery, metallic, disc-shaped, tens of meters in diameter, and evidently artificial, flew within sight of two witnesses," it is clear that further scientific study of the UFO phenomenon is warranted.

Letter

To the editor:

I am researching material on the subject of foo fighters for a book to be published later this year (self-financed) and I am interested in obtaining any information whatever on the subject of foo fighters: book and magazine references (particularly the more obscure ones), firsthand reports, theories, photographs, anything in fact. The subject of foo fighters, while often noted in the UFO literature, has never been studied in depth and I aim to produce the definitive source work of material on the subject.

I will refund all postage and other costs.

Andy Roberts
84 Elland Road
Brighouse, West Yorkshire HD6 2QR
England

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a part of the cover-up -- a point that Moore himself probably would concede. Moreover, Moore's promise that further (and, we would hope, better-substantiated) revelations would follow the MJ-12 release has not been fulfilled at this writing.

Happily, for his part Friedman consistently has been open about the evidence he is collecting in the course of his admirably thorough investigation of all issues raised by the Document.

He has prompted *IUR* with a book on that investigation. While so far he has not proven anything one way or another, his efforts to date suggest at least that, if the Document is a hoax, it is an extraordinarily clever one, perpetrated by an individual or individuals who went to some considerable trouble to make sure that little if anything in public or private records contradicted anything in the Document. In other words, if the Document says so-and-so was in Washington on such-and-such a date and was in the company of General X and Secretary Y, he was. Friedman has found, for instance, that Eisenhower did attend a briefing in Washington on November 18, 1952.

If the Document is a hoax (as, if I had to bet money, I would bet it is; fortunately I don't have to), that raises a whole series of questions nearly as interesting as those that would arise if it were authentic: Who? Why? For what motive? And why go to so much effort? Is the Document a ploy in an officially-sanctioned disinformation scheme? To draw attention from what -- real UFO secrets, or something else? If it's a hoax by ufologists upon ufologists, what's the point? (If it's that kind of hoax, it's failed, since ufologists mostly remain unpersuaded.)

Until we know a lot more, we can reserve judgment even as we maintain a healthy skepticism. So far the evidence for the Document's authenticity is not exactly overwhelming. At the moment it is a mere curiosity and nothing more -- although admittedly the most interesting "mere curiosity" we have seen in years.

Two final points:

(1) It is unfortunate that media accounts focused on the Document rather than on the Roswell incident. Support for the first is circumstantial at best. Support for the second -- in the form of mutually-contradictory testimony from dozens of credible informants -- is seemingly irrefutable.

(2) It is also unfortunate that the media, even after respectful treatment of the MJ-12 controversy as a serious news story, did not pursue the matter further. On a national television show one UFO researcher challenged the network to put its 50 best investigative journalists on the case. Sadly, the network declined. I would have been satisfied if even one or two journalists with a broad range of well-placed Washington informants had consented to pursue the story. If any experienced investigative reporters are reading this, I urge you to follow the Document as far as it goes. If it's the real thing, you'll have the greatest scoop of all time. If it's not the real thing, you'll still have a wonderful tale to tell -- of the most audacious con job since the Hitler Diaries. -- Jerome Clark