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A UFO hoax that's more serious than usual

By Henry Gordon
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Since the first Flying Saucer sighting by private pilot Kenneth Arnold over Washington State 40 years ago, the claims of UFO sightings have rolled in by the thousands. Many have been actual observations of objects in the sky which were not, at the time, identifiable. Interspersed with these have been a good collection of hoaxes.

But now we have reports of a hoax which is perhaps of a more serious nature — an alleged fraud involving the possible counterfeiting of U.S. government documents.

In a July article in The Saturday Star by Terence Dickinson on the anniversary of the modern UFO flap, considerable space was devoted to claims by ufologist Stanton Friedman. These claims referred to a purported UFO crash in New Mexico, in which the bodies of several little green men were

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spirited away by agents of the U.S. government. The government then proceeded to cover up the story, along with the bodies — thus creating a "Cosmic Watergate," Friedman's patented phrase.

Last May, Friedman, along with two associates, William L. Moore and Jamie Shandera, released to the media former "Top Secret" documents which they claimed to have obtained from an anonymous source. These papers showed that U.S. president Harry Truman created a top secret group of scientists named "Majestic-12" (MJ-12) to study the crashed craft and its aliens.

A key document was a memorandum written by Robert Cutler, President Eisenhower's special assistant, dated July 14, 1954. This memo was allegedly sent to General Nathan Twining, then chief of

staff of the U.S. Air Force, informing him of a change of plans for an MJ-12 special briefing of the president and the National Security Council on July 16.

This memo was found by Moore and Shandera in July, 1985, in a box of former Top Secret documents at the U.S. National Archives.

These claims aroused the curiosity of Philip Klass, crack UFO investigator, who proceeded to do some digging.

It seems that the people at National Archives had their suspicions aroused, and they, too, began to dig. Item one: every document, they said was given a registration number. The Cutler/Twining memo "does not bear such a number." The paper itself was not similar to other documents put out by Cutler. And furthermore, the memo bore a security classification that read: "TOP SECRET RESTRICTED SECURITY INFORMATION," but this terminology

did not come into use until more than a decade later.

This writer has in his possession a copy of a report from Jo Ann Williamson, chief of the Military Reference Branch, Archives Division of the U.S. National Archives, in which the above facts are registered — among many others.

For example, "Robert Cutler... was visiting overseas military installations on the day he supposedly issued this memorandum." And, "President Eisenhower's appointment books contain no entry for a special meeting on July 16, 1954 which might have included a briefing on MJ-12."

Another document released by Moore, Friedman and Shandera, which appears to be a President Truman letter to Defence Secretary James Forrestal, creating the MJ-12 group, is also a counterfeit, according to Klass. He claims that it was created by superimposing a spurious message on a photocopy of an authentic Truman letter.

Philip Klass is a senior editor of Aviation Week and Space Technology magazine, and chairs the UFO subcommittee of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP).

Paul Kurtz, CSICOP's chairman, takes a very dim view of all this hankypanky. "The evidence clearly shows that these are hoax documents," says Kurtz. "This represents one of the most deliberate acts of deception ever perpetrated against the news media and the public."

This isn't the usual UFO hoax. Fabrication of counterfeit U.S. government documents is illegal. There could be repercussion if evidence points to the guilty party or parties.

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