

REPORTER DUPED BY UFO DEBUNKERS

By Robert Hastings

On August 11, 2008, I sat down with *Albuquerque Journal* reporter John Fleck to discuss my extensive research on nuclear weapons-related UFO activity and the publication of my 600-page book, *UFOs and Nukes: Extraordinary Encounters at Nuclear Weapons Sites*. Over the last 35 years, I have interviewed nearly 100 former or retired U.S. Air Force nuclear missile personnel, including launch officers, targeting officers, maintenance personnel and security guards. These individuals report ongoing UFO surveillance of our strategic weapons sites, as well as the occasional disruption of those weapons' functionality, just after UFOs were observed to be in their vicinity.

To verify these veterans' statements to me, I provided reporter Fleck with copies of verbatim testimony from a few of them, a copy of my book which contained the testimony of a great many more, and four pages of USAF/NORAD documents, declassified via the Freedom of Information Act, which describe multiple UFO incursions at Minuteman missile sites outside of Malmstrom AFB, Montana, in November 1975.

In spite of this well-documented presentation, Fleck subsequently wrote an exceedingly biased and dismissive article about my research, titled "Book Links UFOs to Nukes," in the August 25, 2008 issue of the *Journal*, which concluded that my contentions of a UFO-Nukes Connection were "wrong" based on the statements of "independent experts." More on those alleged experts in a moment.

During my interview with him, Fleck told me that he was especially interested in the so-called Big Sur UFO case. which I will now briefly summarize: Early one morning in September 1964, an Atlas D Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) was launched from Vandenberg AFB, California, carrying aloft an experimental enemy radar-defeating system and dummy nuclear warhead. Shortly after nosecone-separation, as the warhead raced toward a targeted splash-down at Eniwetok Lagoon, in the Pacific Ocean, it was approached by a disc-shaped UFO. 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 located at Big Sur, California. Then Lt. (now Dr.) Bob Jacobs—who was assigned to the 1369th Photographic Squadron at Vandenberg, and held the title 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 a in-depth optical analysis conducted at Vandenberg.

Following the dramatic incident, says Jacobs, a 16-mm version of the amazing film was shown to a small, select group at Vandenberg. At the conclusion of this meeting, which he attended, he was told to “forget” the filmed events and to never mention them again. Years later, Jacobs learned that after he left the room, 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’ account—relating to both the UFO incident itself and the subsequent cover-up—has been entirely endorsed by another officer, retired Major (later Dr.) Florenze 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 Mansmann who had carefully analyzed the amazing film which, he said, showed a “classic disc” shaped object circling the dummy warhead, shooting four beams of light at the warhead as it did so. It was also Mansmann who had ordered Lt. Jacobs to attend the restricted screening of the film in his office at the division’s headquarters building.

Because reporter Fleck expressed interest in this case, I provided him with copies of private correspondence between Jacobs and Mansmann, from the early 1980s. 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.

At the conclusion of my interview with Fleck, he told me that he would be contacting Kendrick Frazier, the longtime editor of *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine—which has for decades featured articles debunking UFOs and the notion of a U.S. government UFO cover-up—to get Frazier’s point-of-view on the Big Sur case. *Skeptical Inquirer* is the publication of the self-styled Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) which recently renamed itself the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI).

One of the articles published by the debunking magazine, written by Kingston George, an engineer who worked with Bob Jacobs on the telescope project at Vandenberg AFB, claimed that Jacobs’ statements about having filmed a UFO shooting down a dummy nuclear warhead were just “weird claims” having no basis in reality.

However, when I researched the Big Sur case myself, I discovered that George had badly misrepresented Jacobs’ remarks, repeatedly, and had made other crucial factual errors. Indeed, if one compares his article with Jacobs’ and Mansmann’s published and private statements on the Big Sur incident, it becomes glaringly obvious how erroneous and misleading George’s article really is. Nevertheless, *Skeptical Inquirer* editor Frazier published the badly-flawed piece, apparently without comparing George’s claims about what

Jacobs' supposedly had said with what he *actually* had said. Curiously, George's debunking article contains not a single word about Major Mansmann's unequivocal endorsement of Jacobs' account.

Frazier subsequently included Kingston George's badly-flawed article in one of his own books devoted to debunking UFOs, thereby further disseminating George's misstatements and factual errors to an unsuspecting public. Incompetence all around, at the very least, on the part of the debunkers—if not something more suspicious. As I write in my book,

"I consider it noteworthy that George's article was published in CSICOP's in-house magazine, *Skeptical Inquirer*. 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* strong endorsement of George's attempted debunking of the incident is particularly interesting.

Why? Many years ago, I discovered that Kendrick Frazier was in fact employed—beginning in the early 1980s—as a Public Relations Specialist at Sandia National Laboratories, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Yes, the same Sandia Labs that has been instrumental to the success of America's nuclear weapons program since the late 1940s, through its "ordnance engineering" of components for bomb and missile warhead systems.

Interestingly, *Skeptical Inquirer's* publisher's statement, or "masthead", which appears at the beginning of each issue, never once mentioned Frazier's employment at the highly-secretive, government-funded laboratory. Instead, the magazine merely listed, and continues to list, his profession as "science writer"—a reference to his having written several books and articles on various scientific subjects. Also curious is the fact that various online biographies on Frazier—including one written by himself—also fail to mention his two-decade tenure at Sandia Labs. An odd omission indeed.

Consequently, here is the situation: In what is arguably the most dramatic nuclear weapons-related UFO incident ever revealed, two former U.S. Air Force officers insist that one of our experimental nuclear warheads was actually shot down by a flying saucer. And who is responsible for publishing the first debunking article about the Big Sur incident, in which it is claimed that the UFO encounter never happened? Why, a PR guy working for the U.S. government's nuclear weapons program!

...Ironically, over the years, a great many UFO skeptics have used the supposedly accurate "facts" presented in George's article to dismiss the UFO link with nuclear weapons in general, and the Big Sur UFO Incident in particular. Needless to say,

very few of those same skeptics will ever buy a book called, *UFOs and Nukes*, so they will mistakenly continue to believe that Kingston George's article is the last word on the Big Sur case.

Furthermore, the CSICOP-Nukes Connection does not end with Kendrick Frazier. James Oberg, one of CSICOP's leading UFO debunkers, once did classified work relating to nuclear weapons at the Air Force Weapons Laboratory, located at Kirtland AFB, just down the road from Sandia Labs.

From 1970-72, Oberg was an Air Force officer whose assignments with the Battle Environments Branch at the weapons lab involved the development and utilization of computer codes related to the modeling of laser and nuclear weapons. Oberg also served as a "Security Officer" while at the weapons lab and was, therefore, responsible for monitoring the security procedures used to safeguard the classified documents generated by his group.

After Bob Jacobs went public with the UFO shoot-down story, Oberg wrote to him, chastising Jacobs for revealing "top secret" information. In his *MUFON UFO Journal* article, Jacobs wrote that after he broke his silence, "I was contacted by a variety of investigators, buffs, cranks, proponents and detractors alike. James Oberg, a frequent 'mouthpiece' for certain NASA projects and self-styled UFO Debunker wrote to disparage my story and to ask provocatively, 'Since you obviously feel free to discuss top secret UFO data, what would you be willing to say about other top secret aspects of the Atlas warhead which you alluded to briefly...?' I told Mr. Oberg where to put his misplaced cynicism."

Despite Oberg's charge, Jacobs has correctly pointed out that because Major Mansmann had told him that the UFO encounter "never happened", he had no personal knowledge of the classification level attached to the incident.

In any event, it is almost certain that Oberg would not have criticized Jacobs for exposing "top secret UFO data", had he known that Jacobs would subsequently publish his remark. So, here we have one of CSICOP's leading UFO debunkers—whose public stance is that UFOs don't even exist—angrily asking Jacobs in a private letter whether he would also openly discuss "other" top secret aspects of the missile test...

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

Maine—in which Klass accusingly questioned professor Jacobs' fitness as a representative of the academic community.

Jacobs' understandably indignant response to Klass, titled, *Low Klass: A Rejoinder*, may be found online. 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, after Dr. Jacobs ignored Klass' repeated demands that he respond to the debunker's charges, Klass offered character references, citing Admiral Bobby R. Inman (USN Ret.)—the former Director of the National Security Agency, who also held Deputy Director positions at both the Central Intelligence Agency 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 Central Intelligence Agency. 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, given his stock response over the years to those who questioned his motives. Whenever he was confronted with the charge that he was not really a UFO skeptic, but a disinformation agent for the U.S. government, Klass would always recoil indignantly and ridicule the notion. So who does he choose to present as character references in his letter to Jacobs? Two of the top intelligence officers in the U.S. government."

Major Florenze Mansmann's last written remarks on the Big Sur UFO incident are to be found in a letter to Curt Collier, a producer for the television series, *Sightings*. 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 super sonic 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. [i.e. Kingston George was NOT present! -RH] 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..."

In other words, more than 30 years after the top secret incident and more than six years after Jacobs' article appeared in the *MUFON UFO Journal*, Dr. Mansmann was once again unreservedly verifying Bob Jacobs' 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.

My own definitive, extremely well-documented article on the Big Sur incident is available at my website, ufohastings.com. Had reporter John Fleck read it, or the Jacobs-Mansmann letters I provided him, before he wrote his inept and biased article on my research, he would have saved himself a lot of criticism and embarrassment.

Although Fleck knows almost nothing about UFOs, he seems unwilling to learn about the subject, even when provided with credible and documented information derived from declassified government files and the testimony of former military personnel. Instead, he readily swallows the unfounded and suspiciously spun claims of Frazier, Oberg and their ilk—hook, line and sinker. In short, Fleck is the perfect mark—uninformed and vulnerable to misinformation—just the way UFO debunkers prefer their journalists to be.

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