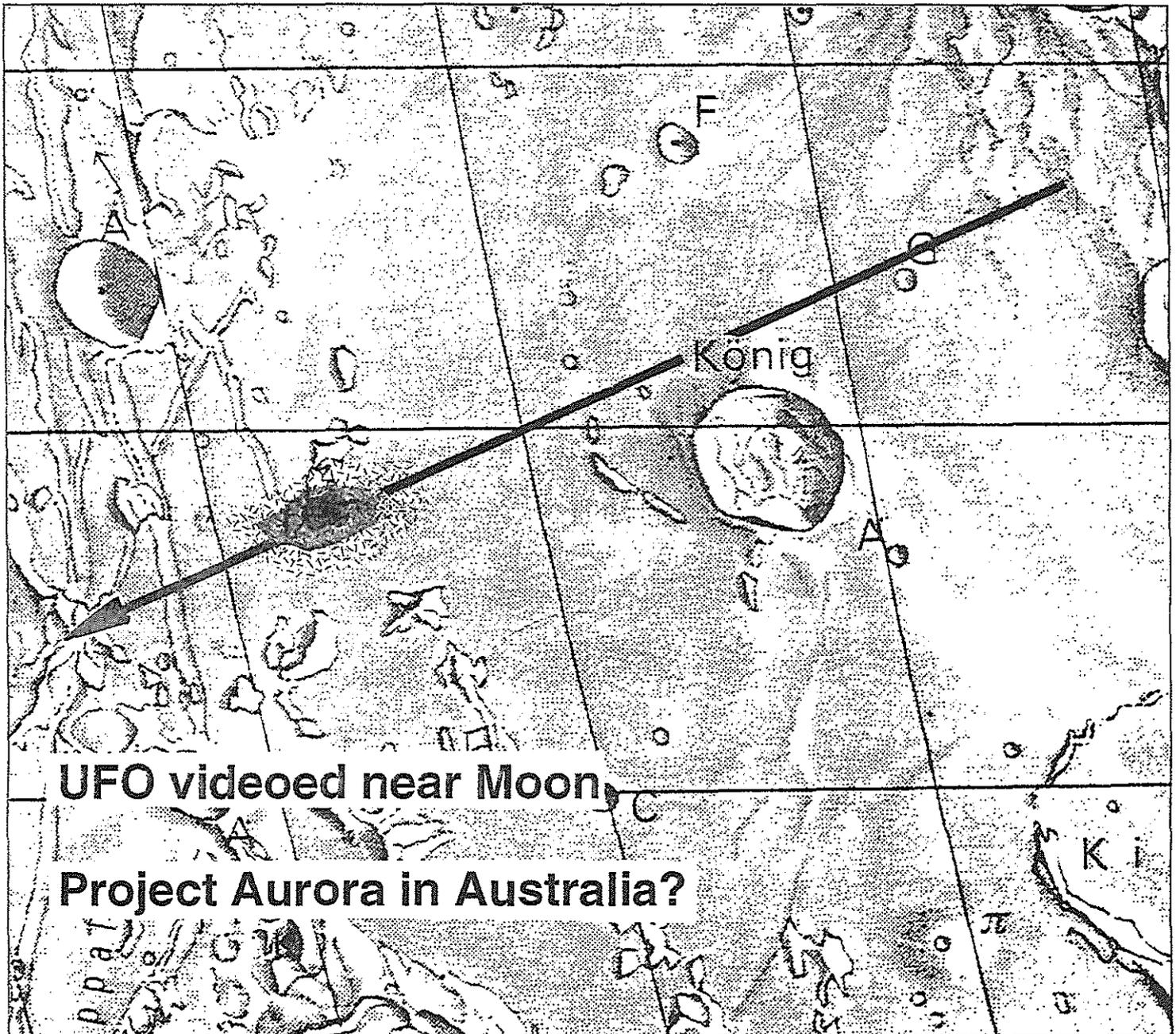


UFO Reporter

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December 1995



UFO videoed near Moon

Project Aurora in Australia?

UFO Reporter

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Fifty more years?

Bryan Dickeson

In terms of increased public interest and acceptance in Australia, 1995 has been a phenomenally good year for UFO enthusiasts.

For example, UFOs have become a mainstay of Aussie TV culture through shows such as *The X-Files*, *Sightings*, *Encounters*, *The Unexplained*, and footage of an alleged 'alien autopsy' from Roswell. Most of these high-quality programs come from the United States, which continues to dominate all developments in the UFO field, but there are plans to include a UFO segment in a mainstream Australian TV drama series — *Mercury* — watch for it on the ABC in 1996. And where the ABC leads, others may well follow. Perhaps *Neighbours* and *Home and Away* will be next.

UFOs only became an item of serious consideration during the last stages of World War 2. In the fifty years since that time, interest in the phenomenon has fluctuated greatly. At present interest appears to be at its highest level ever.

Fortunately, this increased awareness has not caused the downfall of modern civilisation as we know it or any decline in scientific effort, in spite of what most skeptics would have us believe. On this basis, it seems reasonable to assume that Western Civilisation will continue to develop in a recognisable form for at least another fifty years, and that UFO 'culture' will be a part of this development. Exactly how important this UFO contri-

bution will be, is a matter for continuing debate.

Meanwhile, this has been a 'good year', so we should review those important developments from 1995 which will grow in significance in 1996:

During 1995, US investigators increased their efforts to get some kind of official acknowledgement for the 1947 Roswell, New Mexico UFO crash. While the *Roswell Initiative* has not yet produced any UFO debris or alien bodies, it has been the most important and successful political campaign run by UFO groups up to now. After so many previous revival attempts and official dismissals for the Roswell case, it's good to see the debate developing both substance and public action. And it's far from over.

The considerable success of the Roswell Initiative may have helped to fuel the massive promotion of ufology's biggest 'red herring' of 1995. On 28 August 1996, the film of an alleged Roswell alien autopsy was televised world-wide. Advance publicity for the film began in March 1996, and was carefully coordinated for maximum public impact. After some days of

mild confusion, most UFO investigators world-wide declared the 'film' itself to be a fake. Given the fragmentation and dispersal of UFO investigation groups, this quick response and unanimity was most surprising. As the autopsy film fiasco dies down, we can expect the Roswell Initiative to gear up once more in 1996.

Allegations of secret UFO technology developments at Area 51 in Nevada continued to make UFO news in 1995. Catering for 'UFO tourism' in the surrounding area has become such a major industry that the Groom Lake facility is causing the US Military some embarrassment. Apparently, many 'black' research projects are now being relocated from the United States to Pine Gap in Australia (our Freedom of Information legislation is less liberal, and the Government here is very US-friendly). UFOR receives increasing numbers of requests for information about this development from overseas, but is rarely able to oblige.

We have heard about US scientists on secret projects who take 'holidays' in Australia, and who don't bother to return, but that is all. (The lack of data from

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If you think you can help or have something to offer, please contact The Editors, UFOR(NSW), PO Box Q95 Queen Victoria Building, Sydney 2000.

local sources probably shows the relocation may be working as planned — most information we get here comes from material published overseas.) Fragmented reports of unusual aerial lights from Central Australia, very similar to what has been reported from Groom Lake, do come up occasionally, but once again, details are hard to get. The relocation will most likely become more of an issue during 1996.

Another important issue in Australia ufology concerns UFO abduction support and research. Abduction research can take up much of an investigator's time and resources. Although support services and some local information are now becoming available, this area remains very political, very sensitive and very difficult to investigate. For example, during 1995, UFOR was able to publish an account of the Kelly Cahill case from Victoria, using material mostly published in overseas publications. Many important details of the case are still 'on hold' locally, pending complex legal wranglings. This includes two, and possibly three books about the incident by people directly involved, or by others who investigated it. Hopefully, this material will become available towards the end of 1996.

In the meantime, many local UFO investigators have become so disenchanted with the Kelly case and the politics it has generated, they have downgraded it's importance or dismissed it altogether as a 'stunt'. In 1996, I expect Australian investigators will have the opportunity to review the case properly, and accord it the value it deserves. Doctor John Mack and Kenneth Ring will be visiting Australia in

1996, and this should help to promote the discussion.

During August 1996, Brisbane will be hosting a UFO Convention to showcase Australian UFO groups and their investigations. This will offer an excellent opportunity for you to find out what is really going on in Australia; who is doing what, and where.

Two other developments to watch out for in 1996 (both from the US), are:

- Hoagland's ongoing Moon-Mars revelations. Some astonishing aerial photographic material has been retrieved and analysed from old NASA space expedition records in recent years. This shows the presence of artificial structures of great antiquity — 'archaeological ruins' where there shouldn't be any. With the evidence mounting, we can expect more startling discoveries throughout the coming year.
- The 1996 Presidential Elections could produce an important public debate over whether the US Military should disclose what it

knows about UFOs. Presidential candidates are being strongly lobbied (by the Roswell Initiative and others) to have it tell all. Some UFO researchers there believe this campaign will succeed where others have failed, given the diminished importance of the US Military after the Cold war. (However, other UFO buffs still remember the unfulfilled promises of President Jimmy Carter and say that given the present US Administration's lack of commitment, activity and achievement on important issues, we should not expect too much.)

Perhaps the most remarkable achievement of 1995 has been the ability of the UFO debate to survive and flourish after 50 years of cover-up, suppression, disinformation and attempts to delay the inevitable. What a tremendous waste of effort and public monies it has been by the Establishment to stifle an idea whose time has come.

The next 50 years should be much better.

Next issue: (out soon)

- Doctor Mack visits Australia
- UFO Flap at Gosford
- Science discovers the Flying saucer (again!)

Up the Establishment

Alan Craddock

The search for knowledge and its scientific applications have elevated mankind to dizzy heights. Modern technology lets us travel in space and extends human life expectancy well beyond its natural limit.

Throughout this long struggle, examples of genius have helped point us in the right direction.

Many early scientists developed their ideas to the chagrin of the authorities of their time and suffered the denigration of that Establishment, sometimes to the death.

However, their innovations have in turn become the basis of today's Establishment. Freedom of expression in scientific circles is now back to where it was when Galileo and Copernicus first brought forward their anti-establishment theories.

If mainstream scientists can't understand something, then it cannot possibly exist in our universe. If someone or something goes against their mainstream, in fields of expertise such as quantum mechanics, astronomy, or physics — even a heretical scientist — they will be ostracised to the point of professional suicide.

Ufology stands out as one of the most ridiculed branches of research. But ask yourself why is this so? Is it because scientists haven't a clue on how to start understanding them, or is there some innate fear old scientific theories will come under scru-

tiny if someone rocks the boat? Probably, it's a bit of both.

Imagine, for example, what happens to the theoretical physics Establishment if a new set of rules came along. Physicists would first object the heretics were taking over. (Heard this all before? Sure you have.) However, we are also being manipulated by people who push their mainstream beliefs to keep control of the next grant which keeps them in work. The SETI project was closed down after enough detractors yelled in the US Congress that it was a waste of money. Never mind about the benefits to the rest of humanity should something come out of it.

This is tantamount to the Spanish Inquisition method of casting around for witches to burn. We waste billions of dollars on finding new ways to kill people halfway round the world, but when it comes to funding research on the origin of the universe, or to search the sky for other forms of life, it's a waste of money.

To my way of thinking, mainstream scientists don't want to find out because of their comfort factor. (If you stick to what you know and what you can control, you don't have to deal with too many hard questions, and the good life goes on.)

You may take the view that scientists already know alien beings exist, so why waste money looking for more? Well the logical response to that would be to

tell everyone and then to get on with handling it.

I cannot understand why the concept of alien beings visiting us has to be endorsed by the scientific Establishment anyway, or the military, or the Government for that matter. Just because a few scientists or generals say something is true, does not make it so. Perhaps it is time to bypass what the Establishment thinks, to set up an international body that can deal with the truth.

Besides, we vote national Governments in and fund them to serve us. As a taxpayer I believe I have a right to know what my Government agencies are doing with my money. Unfortunately, no one trusts a politician any more; we elect them fully knowing they will fail us somewhere down the line. Meanwhile, the Military is supposed to be answerable to these suspect politicians and protect us from invasions. The result is that both Government and the Military continue to keep the truth from us although no perceived alien 'threat' has been found.

With the benefit of 20–20 hindsight from the Cold War era, we know that both the CIA and KGB actively promoted paranoia in their respective Governments for continued funding. There was often little or no evidence of an enemy capability, and minimal public accountability. This provided the mandate for a few Generals to

run roughshod over the entire World. Since the demise of the Cold War, their mandate has become less secure.

We may now be in a transitional phase where these military agencies are attempting to secure a new mandate by transferring the 'threat' off-planet. A tricky manoeuvre, given their past record, but not impossible.

Shortly, all candidates in the 1996 US Presidential Campaign

will be asked to release information on the existence of aliens and their reason for coming here, or to at least make such disclosures part of their becoming President.

During the Cold War, President Jimmy Carter gave such an undertaking, but was overruled by the Generals. This time, with the military mandate less secure, UFO investigators should get to see more and possibly all, of

what has been hidden for 50 years.

Even if the Establishment continues to resist it, the push for significant change now under way is becoming irresistible. Over the past five decades, UFO investigators have become accustomed to operating as the cultural underdog; we may now have to brace ourselves for something completely different — success! □

British Airlines jet pilots duck as UFO flashes past at 13,000 ft

Two pilots thought their last moment had come as their British Airways jet headed for mid-air collision — with a high-speed UFO.

Terrified fliers Roger Wills and Mark Stuart ducked down in the cockpit when the brightly-lit mystery craft appeared only yards in front of them at 13,000ft over the Pennines.

But as they waited for the deadly impact, they saw the triangular UFO flash down the right-hand side of their Boeing 737 and disappear.

Captain Wills and First Officer Stuart, 24, immediately checked with air traffic control.

But they were told theirs was the only plane on the radar.

Their flight from Milan, Italy, to Manchester Ringway was 17 minutes from touchdown when the 'alien' invader zoomed past.

The Boeing landed safely, with the 60 passengers unaware of the drama.

Sketches

At first, the pilots didn't tell pals about the UFO, fearing ridicule.

But BA bosses were informed and they sent a detailed log and sketches to the Joint Air Miss Working Group, which is part of the Civil Aviation Authority.

An inquiry was launched into the January 6 incident.

But a CAA spokesman said yesterday: "We have not

been able to trace the aircraft involved."

Sensible

The pilots refused to comment. A colleague said: "They are high-grade, sensible guys."

"Everyone's talking about what they saw."

Theories that the UFO could have been a new military aircraft were discounted by experts.

A spokesman for Jane's Defence Weekly said: "We know of nothing at all being developed that could account for this sighting."

From *The Sun* (UK), 28 January 1995.

(Thanks to Jean Bastide, Aix-en-Provence, France) □

'Konig 080895': UFO videoed near the Moon?

Graham Stewart (UFOTec Sydney)

© First printed in *INUFOR Digest* (November, 1995)

Soon after midnight on Tuesday 8 August 1995, an amateur astronomer in Dee Why, New South Wales videotaped a dark object passing across the Mare Humorum (Sea of Moisture) south of Gassendi crater, in the lower south west quadrant of the Moon.

Steve has been interested in Astronomy since his teens, and actively observing the skies for two decades. He now uses a 10-inch Meade reflector with a focal length of 1140mm, which is fitted with a clockwork-driven tracking unit. At the time of this observation, between 0030 and 0040hrs on 8 August 1995, Steve was experimenting with using his videocamera for astronomical observations.

His video camcorder was set at 8x zoom and hand-held to the eyepiece (a 2x barlow lens with 25mm focal length, rated f4.5) for several seconds to record surface features on the Moon. (The Mare Humorum is a favoured test area for astronomers, with many well-documented features.)

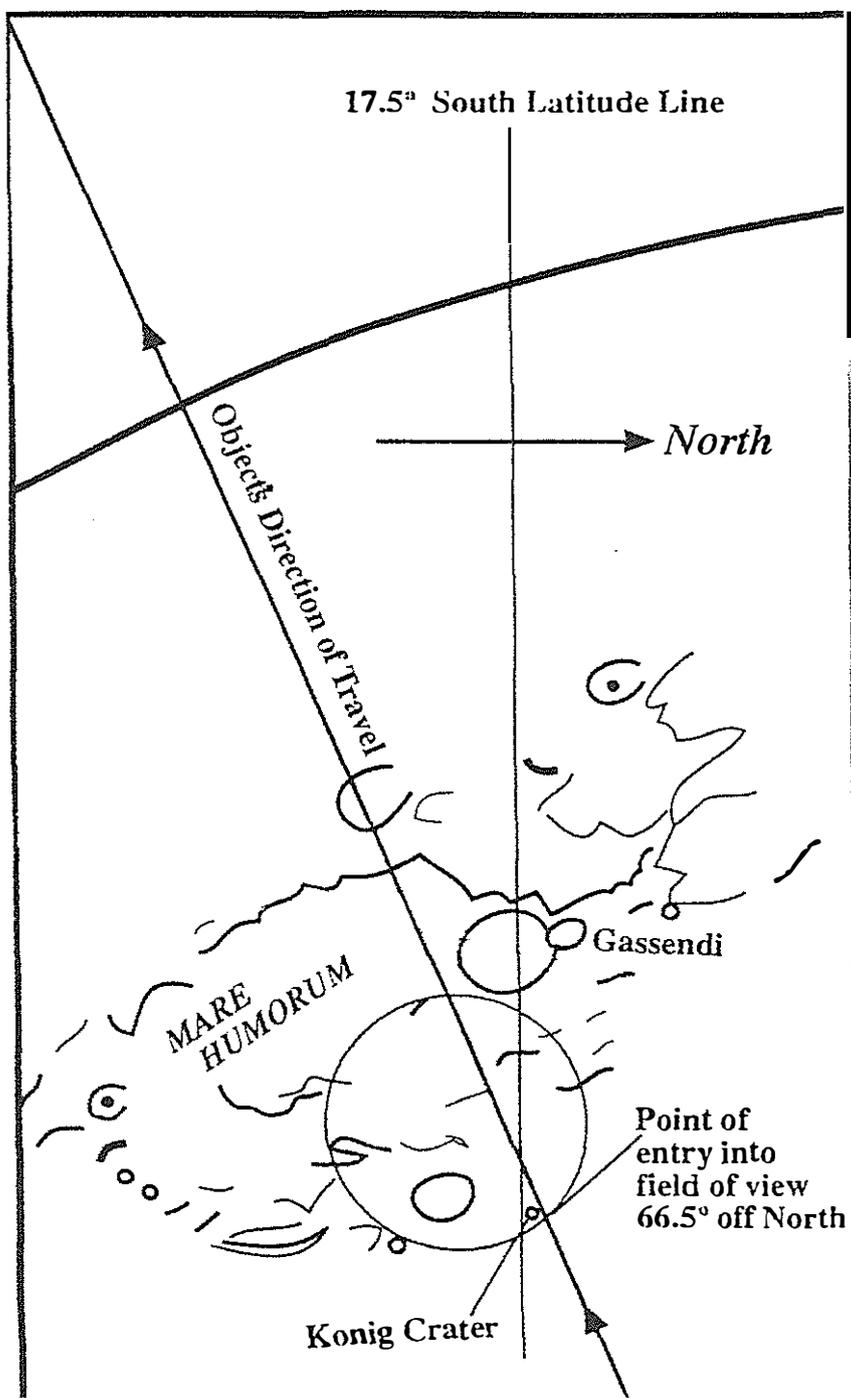
The magnification factor was:

$$\frac{1140}{25} \times 2 \times 8 = 729.6 \text{ times}$$

While replaying his test video through the viewfinder, Steve noticed a dark object enter the field of view in the lower right field, just above the crater Konig. It moved very quickly, disappearing in the upper left field of view. The Moon was $39^{\circ}40'$ above the western horizon and 80% illuminated, with the next Full Moon due on 11 August.

From the southern hemisphere, the Moon's north pole was pointing downwards and slightly towards the south east.

The telescope is looking at a circle of moonscape about 225.5km in diameter, or an angle of sky $1^{\circ}56.75''$ across.



On closer inspection of the video sequence, it was found that the object appears on 26 consecutive video frames. For a setting of 36 frames per second, the duration of the 'sighting' or video clip is therefore:

$$\frac{26}{36} = 0.72 \text{ seconds}$$

Steve contacted INUFOR early in September 1995. A copy of the video and four photographic enlargements of individual video frames were provided soon afterwards for analysis. The video

Preliminary investigations show the object is not an aeroplane, a man-made satellite, or a piece of space junk. It appears to be situated well out in space ...

shows an object entering the field of view at 66.5° off lunar North. It travels in a straightline and disappears from the field of view at 246.5°.

Near-Earth objects

To gauge how close the object was to the telescope, a preliminary analysis was made:

- The photographic enlargements show a dark, fairly regular or streamlined, elliptical object with a slightly conical bulge to one side, which is clearly silhouetted against the sunlit Moon.
- The object does not appear to be generating any light itself. (If it were, it could be a piece of space junk, or a meteor heating up on re-entering Earth's atmosphere.)
- Astronomical telescopes are designed for observing very distant objects such as the planets, stars, nebulae and so on. They have a very large depth of field at long range. A bird flying past, or an insect crawling over the mirror, would barely register (these would only imperceptibly reduce the amount of light available for focusing).
- If the object were some kind of aircraft operating high up in the Earth's atmosphere, it would be about 2 metres long and travelling

at about 5200km/hr (Mach 4.5) — which is unlikely.

- If the object were in low-Earth orbit, some 250km up in space, it would be over 15m long and travelling at about 650km per hour. This is too slow to be either a satellite or a meteor. (Conversely, if it was a man-made satellite, it would be travelling too fast to be picked up on video.)

I contacted Sydney Observatory to verify these details against available satellite orbit data, space junk re-entry predictions or and observations. Their information confirmed that:

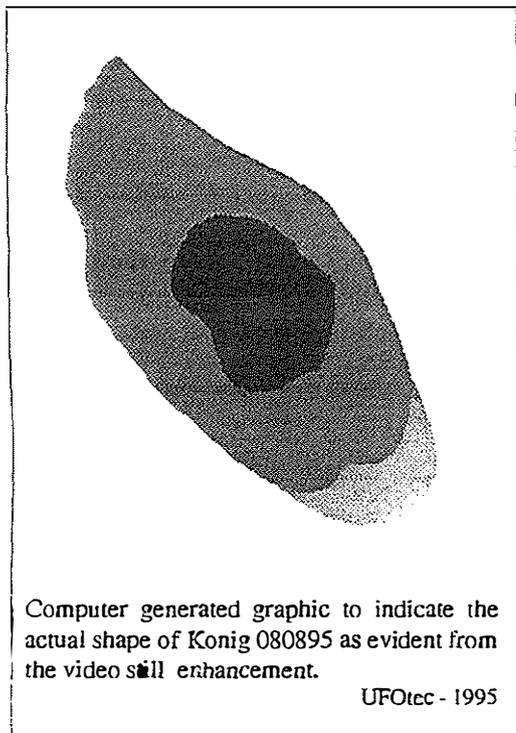
- There were no satellite movements for that time and date for that part of the sky.
- There were no space junk re-entries scheduled or recorded for that time and date.

The preliminary investigation indicated the object was unlikely to be an aeroplane, a man-made satellite, or a piece of space junk. It appears to be situated well out in space, beyond the Earth's atmosphere.

Locating the object

Two further *gamma-processed* enlargements were provided. (Gamma processing exaggerates small variations in light and shade across a video image — a computer is used to compare and contrast small clusters of picture elements or pixels, within the image.) This enhanced-contrast picture isolates the object from the bright Moon surface, by blanking out the background. It allows a closer inspection of the object. These images indicated that:

- The object's shape is consistent throughout the video sequence, and not due to atmospheric distortion.
- The object has a dark, central mass, and possibly a dome-like feature.
- Careful examination of the processed image reveals a faint off-centre highlight, which suggests the object has a solid, slightly-reflective



core. The preliminary investigation did not indicate any reflection at all. The position of this area is consistent with the sun's position in the sky, suggesting the object is reflecting the sun's light. This places the object outside Earth's deep shadow (the *umbra*); although it may be within the *penumbra* (Earth's partial shadow; some 7,500 to 10,000 km out from the observer). The highlight also eliminates the possibility the shape on the Moon is actually a shadow cast by something between the Moon and the Sun.

If the object were in the penumbra only 7,500km away, it would have a speed of about 19,500km/hr and a length of around 95m; if at 10,000km its speed is about 26,000km/hr, the length 125m.

If the object were a meteor or a satellite, it would have more clearly-defined edges at this distance.

Incidentally, Meteors normally reflect about as much sunlight as the brighter parts of the Moon's surface (an *albedo* of 12-16%). If the object were a meteor 10,000km out, it would not

show up so darkly against the Moon background.

The fuzzy margin and low albedo (around 1-2%) are therefore likely to be properties peculiar to the UFO, which is at least 7,500km from the observer, out in space.

To set an outer limit to the object's position we can assume that if it is reasonably close to the Moon, it will cast a shadow somewhere on the surface. There is no trailing shadow apparent in the video.

If the object was in fact a shadow cast by something outside the telescope's field of view, it should be possible to re-create the effect. I set up a large piece of card with the object's trajectory marked and aligned it with the calculated direction of the Sun when it was 45° above the horizon.

The difference between the direction of the Sun and the path of the object is only 9.5°. It was immediately obvious that if the object was a shadow, then the body causing it would also be visible in the telescope, just behind and slightly below the shadow. There is no evidence of this on the original video or the stills.

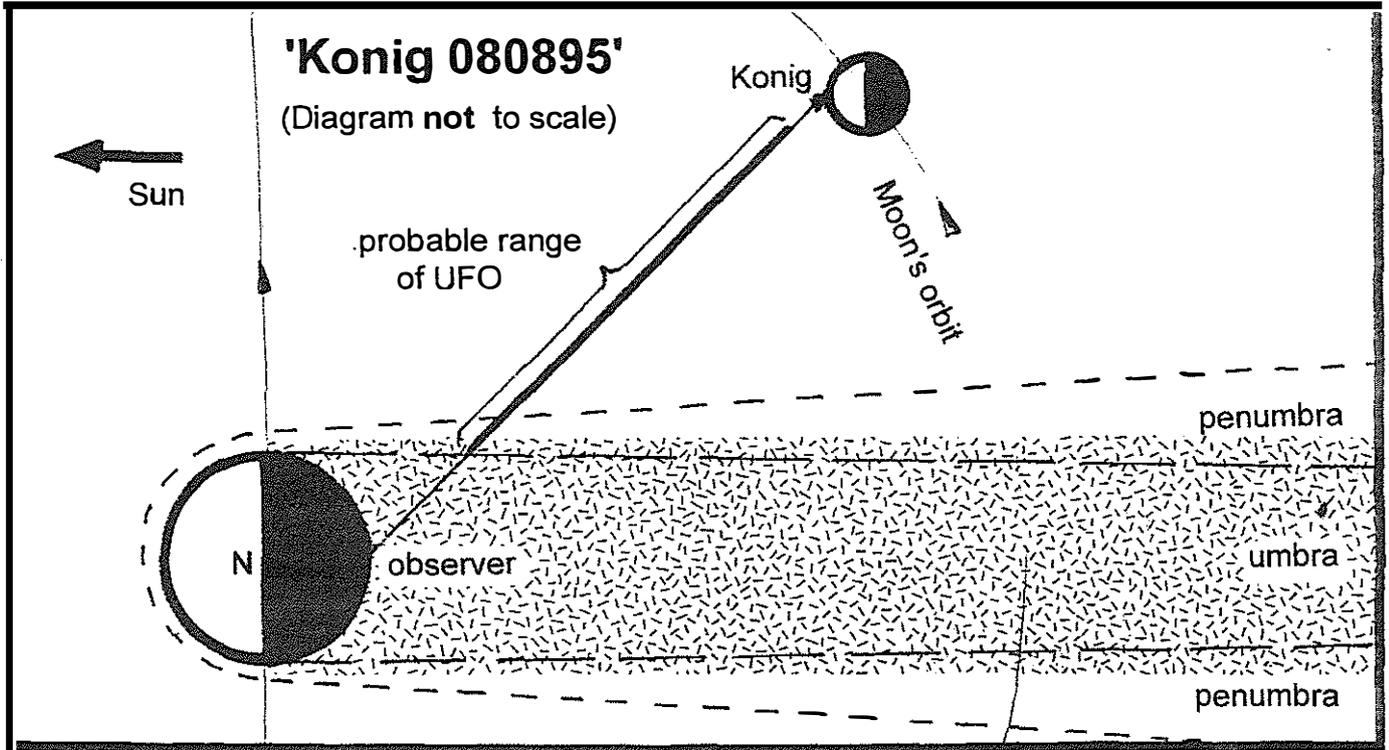
This leaves us with two further options, either:

- The object is more than 120km (approximately) from the Moon's surface, or
- The object travels less than 23km above the Moon's surface, so that its fuzzy edge blurs with any shadow being cast.

The second possibility is an interesting one. Further careful enhancement of the image might show whether a combination of fuzzy edge and shadow is affected by having lunar terrain close by, or by changes in reflectivity of the terrain.

If the object is very close to the lunar surface, then it would qualify as a true

The fuzzy margin and low albedo (around 1-2%) are therefore likely to be properties peculiar to the UFO, which is at least 7,500km from the observer.



'TLP' — a *transient lunar phenomenon* (see box, this page).

If it is a TLP, there are other intriguing possibilities. When the object first enters the field of view (video sequence frames 1 and 2), it passes very close to the crater Konig. It appears to be about 10% shorter than Konig, which has a known diameter of 20-21km. This suggests the object could have a maximum length of 18-19km.

The Moon has a slightly elliptical orbit, which means its distance from Earth varies between 356,400 and 406,700 km. At 11.1 days into its lunar cycle, early on 8 August, its distance from Earth would be about 381,550 km.

The speed of an object near the Moon at this time would be about 1,140,000km/hr, or above Mach 950 (that is, 315km/sec). Such phenomenal speeds and sizes are unrealistic.

Conclusions:

- a The Konig 080895 video does not appear to show any known natural or man-made phenomenon.
- b The UFO appears to be outside the Earth's atmosphere, is probably

closer to the Earth than the Moon, and probably moving at high velocity (in excess of 20,000km/hr). It is slightly elliptical, at least 100m long, and may include a dome-like structure on one surface.

- c The dark object has a dense, barely-reflective core and is surrounded by an unusual fuzzy zone, which may partially absorb light radiation.
- d The very low albedo value for the object (suggested from the gamma-enhancement material) is consistent with a dimly sunlit or partially reflective object. This could be an object within the Earth's penumbra or further out in space.
- e Upper size and speed limits calculated for the object if it were on the Moon are too high to be realistic. It is therefore unlikely to be a TLP, but further image enhancement might be able to clarify this.

Further reading:

W.R. Corliss, 'Transient Lunar Phenomena' in *Mysterious Universe: A Handbook of Astronomical Anomalies* (1979) □

Transient Lunar Phenomena (TLPs)

Astronomers have recorded thousands of unusual short-term phenomena on the Moon's surface over the centuries. These reports include flashes of light (lightning?), 'dust storms' or clouds, and unusual patches of coloured light, or geometric shadows. Sometimes, these have been interpreted and publicised as large 'structures' or artefacts (although this particular interpretation has not been encouraged by mainstream science).

Previously, TLPs were assumed to be volcanic or meteorological in origin, but since visiting the Moon we know both of these causes to be very unlikely.

TLPs have also been photographed by astronauts on the Moon and continue to be reported (a reliable source has informed UFOR about a bright point of light travelling parallel to the Moon's terminator caught on video by a Canberra astronomer in 1992).

In recent years, TLP reports have once again attracted the interest of UFO investigators.

US scientist Richard Hoagland and others have reopened the debate that many of these effects may well be caused by light reflected from vast artificial structures or relics which are probably extra-terrestrial in origin. □

Argentinian plane buzzed by a spaceship, says pilot

Buenos Aires, Wednesday, 2 August

Argentina was nervously watching the skies yesterday after an airliner narrowly missed hitting a UFO that darted in its path.

Jorge Polanco was piloting an Aerolineas Argentinas jet headed for the south-west winter resort town of San Carlos de Bariloche about midnight yesterday when he was forced to take emergency action to avoid what witnesses described as a spaceship.

"As I was making the final approach, I suddenly saw in front of the plane a white light which was bearing right down on us really fast before it halted about 100 metres away," he said.

He said that as he frantically manoeuvred his plane, carrying 103 passengers, the UFO took a bizarre turn so that it could follow the airliner and flew in tandem with it for about 100 metres.

Air Force Major Jorge Oviedo said he and several others also saw the UFO and that there was a simultaneous power cut throughout the entire city.

The pilot said the object was about the size of a jetliner. Officials are investigating the sighting, From *The Age*, Melbourne, Thursday 3 August 1995.

(Thanks to KT, Sydney) □

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I'VE GOT SOME IMAGE EDITING SOFTWARE, SO I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF ERASING SOME OF THE SMUDGES THAT KEPT SHOWING UP AROUND THE CLOUDS. NO NEED TO THANK ME."

Project Aurora — coming to a secret base near here?

L. Groenmann

UFO groups in California have accumulated numerous reports of mysterious sonic booms over the western coast of the United States in recent years during the course of their normal UFO investigations. These sonic booms have been linked to trials of test aircraft from secret inland research facilities such as Area 51/Groom Lake.

Investigators in the US have now raised the possibility that two sonic booms heard in Sydney on Friday 29 May 1992 at 0450hrs and again at 1015hrs (reported in *UFO Reporter*, Vol.1 No.3, September 1992), were linked to long-distance trials of these secret aircraft. A test aircraft is presumed to have flown from Area 51 to the US military outpost at Pine Gap in Central Australia, and back.

Area 51/Groom Lake

Area 51 is named after a grid reference number on old maps (also known as 'Groom Lake' from a nearby dry lake bed). It is a complex of giant hangers, a control tower, fuel tanks, antennae, and one of the world's longest aircraft runways (9.5km). The facility appears to include extensive underground tunnels, caverns, production facilities and testing laboratories. Boeing 737 shuttle services operate daily from Los Vegas for the 200-300 civilian employees believed to work at the facility (Groom Lake has a very long association with the Boeing Corporation).

The facility has been used since the 1950s for covert military research and development. Known projects include Lockheed's U2 CIA Skyplane during the 1950s, the SR-71 Blackbird spyplane (1960s), and US Stealth fighter and bomber of the 1980s.

Security around the facility is extreme, and notices warn trespassers that 'deadly force' is authorised against intruders. Motion sensors, cameras, se-

curity patrols, and black helicopters are used routinely to discourage the curious (although these may have actually intensified public interest in recent years).

US commentators claim the area is home to most of the United States' 'black' programs — secret military research projects conducted outside the jurisdiction of Congress, and that it played an essential role in keeping US technology well in front during the Cold War. The facility is still operating 8 years after the disintegration of the USSR, and the US Military has strongly denied its very existence until recently:

- In 1994, the US Air Force finally admitted publicly that the facility was used "for testing and training technologies, operations and systems critical to the effectiveness of US military forces".
- Recently, the families of several Groom Lake ex-employees have begun suing the US Defence Department for deaths caused by exposure to toxic chemicals at the facility. (All chemical byproducts from stealth projects are destroyed or buried on-site, and employees have complained about noxious fumes generated during their incineration.)
- The conditions of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty agreed between the US and the Commonwealth of Independent States, allow both sides to monitor each other's 'secret' bases

from space. Soviet satellite photographs of Area 51, several years old, routinely find their way into the public domain (usually outside of the United States). The availability of such material to the public and UFO investigators, has further compromised the US Military's position of denying everything.

Ufological interest

UFO investigators have had an on-again, off-again interest in the facility over the years. This depended on reports (usually sketchy) from people who claimed to have seen 'exotic, and possibly alien' aircraft, either near the base or on it:

- Commercial airline pilots traversing that part of the American mid-west routinely report unusual aircraft on their radar screens travelling more than 8000 km per hour (Mach 7.5), or executing right-angle turns at high speed, as UFOs.
- In 1989, Bob Lazar (who describes himself as a civilian engineer), added to the notoriety of Area 51 with widely-publicised accounts of having worked on extraterrestrial craft there. So far, Lazar's evidence has not been completely convincing, but the increased publicity generated in the United States and overseas since has clearly not helped military operations there.

Recent speculation

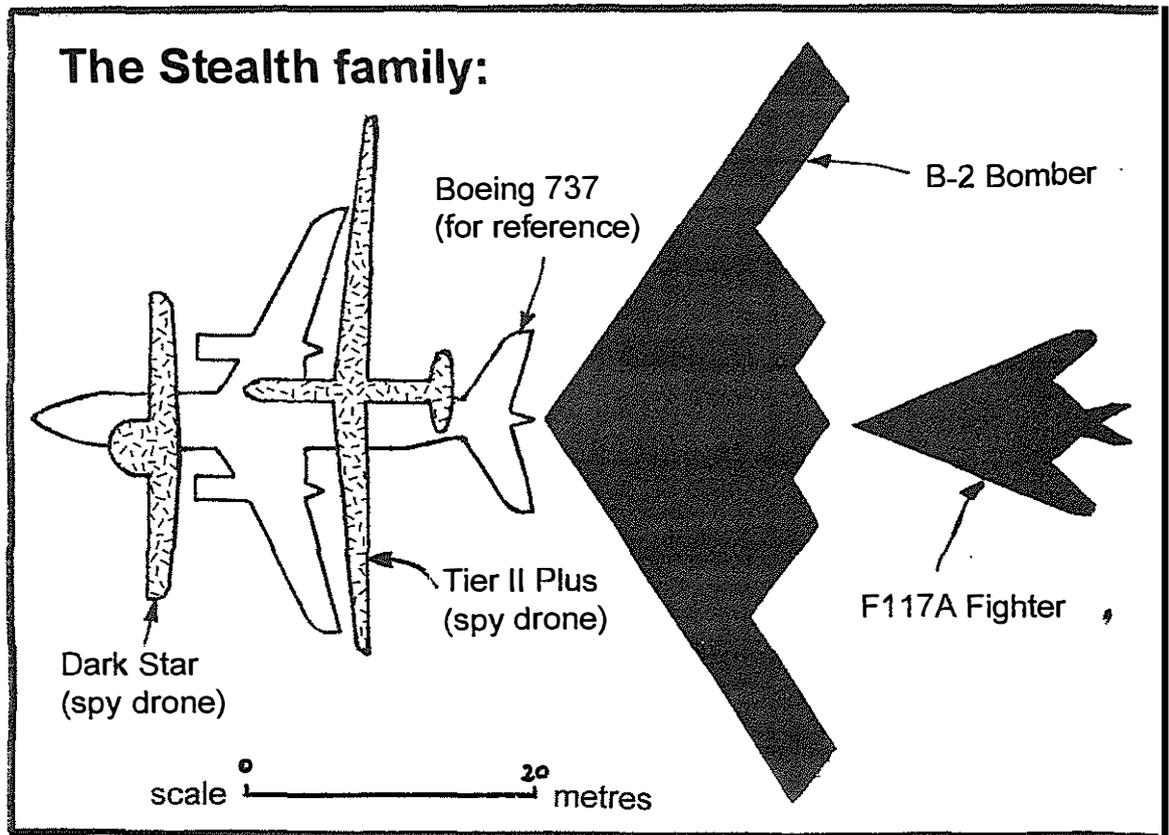
Area 51 played an extremely important role in the US Stealth program during the 1970s and 80s. A greater public awareness of this role has led to increasing speculation about what else may still be happening there. It has also meant that Area 51 has become a major focus for the UFO investigation 'industry'. Today it is almost mandatory that any UFO magazine or book from the US contains something about Area 51. Inevitably, rumour and good old military 'disinformation' have become an important part of this ufological phenomenon.

For example, early unofficial accounts from 1992 reported that at least three prototype Stealth 'robot' aircraft were under development there. These 'drones' were said to be *hypersonic*. That is, they had speeds greater than Mach 5 (over 5,500 km/hr) and were attributed various project names such as 'Aurora' and 'Dark Star'. For comparison, inter-continental ballistic missiles travel at about Mach 3 to Mach 4, so this technology would have to be something very new and very different.

Dark Star

Over recent months, more details about the Dark Star project have been made public by Lockheed-Martin/Boeing. This official 'material' shows significant variation over a short time period:

- The UK publication *UFO Magazine* (Sept/Oct 1995) reported that Dark Star was an aerial reconnaissance craft designed to operate mid-altitude (at 15,250m) for up to 10 hours. It had a massive wing span of 69ft (21m) and a tiny U-shaped fuselage 15ft (4.6m) long and 5ft (1.5m) deep. This elegant, long-wing design indicated the craft was probably subsonic. (The stresses created at very high speeds are so great that supersonic aircraft wings have to be short and triangular.) Such a craft would definitely not produce a sonic boom. *UFO Magazine* said the Dark Star drone was made of light, composite materials, mostly graphite (to reduce radar-detectability), and powered by a single 8.5 kN (1,900 lb)—thrust Williams Rolls-Royce F129 (FJ44) turbofan, enclosed within the central fuselage. Dark Star would have independent take-off, cruising, and landing capabilities. It was due to be moved to NASA-Dryden at Edwards Air Force Base, California, for launching in November or December 1995.
- The US mainstream publication *Popular Science* (October 1995) was able to confirm most of these speci-



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fications. It also provided greater detail and diagrams for both a tailless Dark Star and a larger, more conventional looking 'Tier II Plus' drone. Both drones are actually self-propelled gliders, with top speeds of 420km/hr and 480km/hr — definitely subsonic! For comparison, a Boeing 737 passenger plane has a top speed of 937 km/hr. Both drones are much smaller than the B-2 Stealth bomber (see 'Stealth Family' diagram, this page), and while expensive to develop, each would presumably cost much less than the subsonic B-2 (that is, less than \$US1 billion per aircraft). Their low speeds would make these high-tech drones vulnerable to enemy jet fighters during daylight, which suggests they are planned for night-time surveillance.

The problem is that the technical details released for Dark Star and Tier II Plus, indicate that while this is very clever technology, it is technology at the low end of the Stealth program; the still-to-be-concluded business of the 'old' Stealth project. This is not the hypersonic technology we were first prom-

ised, and should not be confused with the 'new' technology presently being developed at Area 51. (And here I am reminded of the second-hand reports of secret US aircraft tests in the 1950s and 60s which were used to fob off genuine UFO investigations as 'only USAF experiments' — the Stealth devices revealed 30 years later were nothing like those early UFO reports.)

Presumably this other non-UFO hardware being reported is the fabled 'Aurora'.

Project Aurora

So what do we know about Aurora?.

The most interesting reports tell of unusual condensation trails (*contrails* — like 'doughnuts on a rope'), of triangular-shaped craft overall, and of unusual roaring supersonic booms. Aeronautical engineers suggest that a 'pulse detonation system' is being tested, where super-cold ammonia or methane is ejected behind the object. This creates a series of controlled explosions which could push the aircraft up to speeds of Mach 8 at high altitude (40,000m). However, all of this is very speculative.

The US Military remains extremely secretive about Project Aurora, and ap-

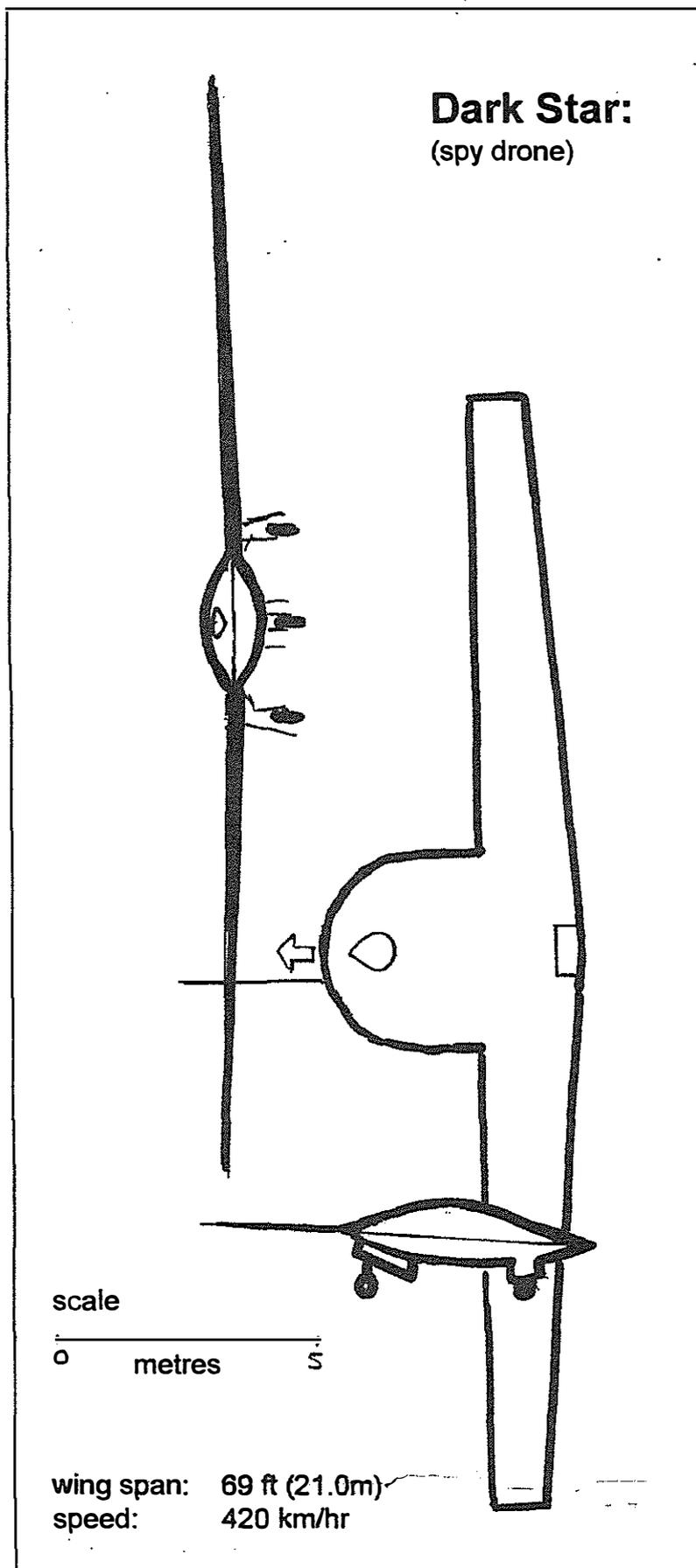
pears to be looking for somewhere other than Groom Lake to continue development:

- Increasing numbers of UFO enthusiasts who visit the hills overlooking Groom Lake routinely report aerial lights and activity at the facility, and
- UFO investigators have been using Freedom of Information (FoI) legislation to harass the Military for more details about what is going on.

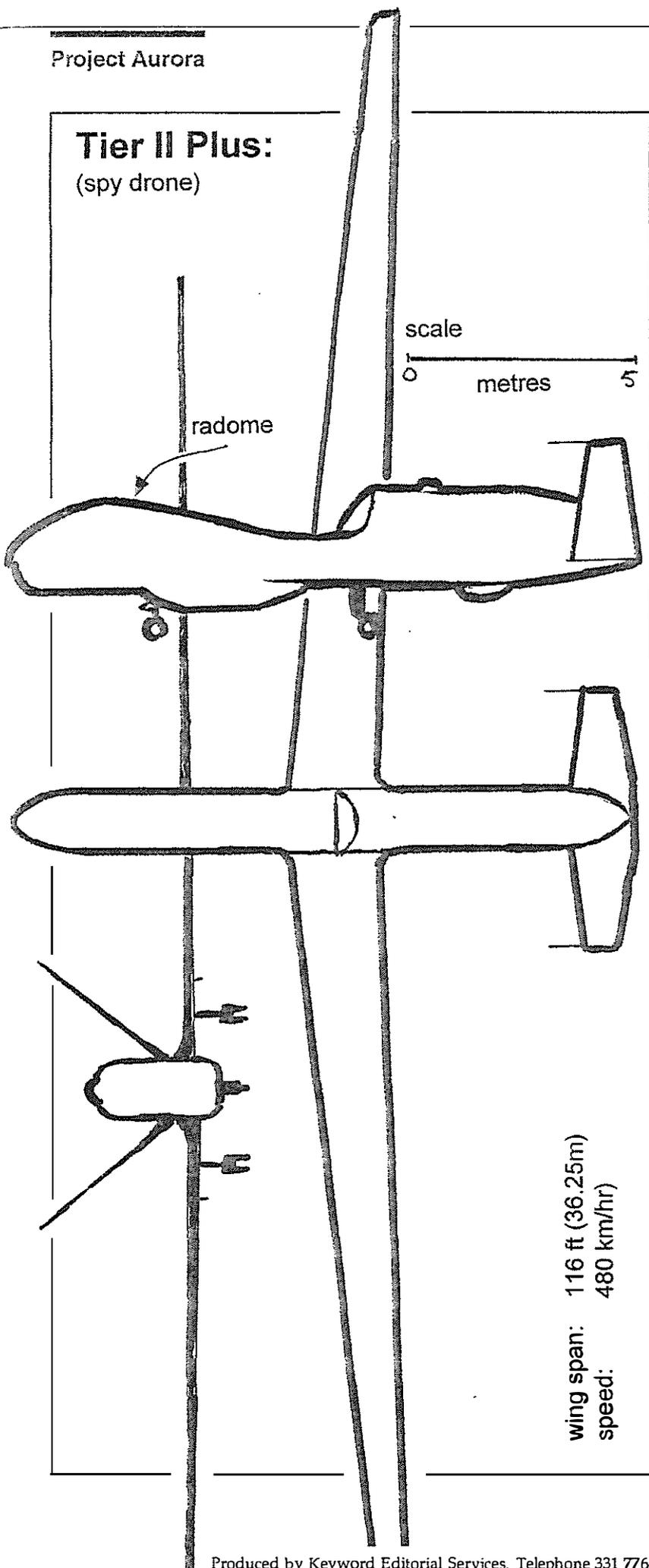
The Australian connection

Australian UFO investigators have recently been informed that the US Military is actively looking overseas for suitable test locations, because public interest in Area 51 is now too great for comfort. Australia is seen as the best option:

- On-going political problems and increasing local hostility towards US bases in the Philippines and Okinawa have made these less desirable test locations. Their location and size also means that tests could be readily monitored from foreign submarines offshore in international waters. The US base at Pine Gap, Central Australia, is seen as being a suitably inaccessible site for such tests. (Well inland, it is rated more secure than the US communications complex at Northwest Cape in West Australia, for example.)
- The Australian Government is very US-pliant, and Australia's FoI legislation is not as liberal or as accessible as that of the US.
- While the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty permits both sides to monitor each other's secret bases from space **without interference**, this may only refer to surveillance of sites on each country's 'home' territory, and not to overseas bases. (Satellite surveillance of both US and Australian sites is equally possible from space, but the legalities of interfering with spy flights over a third country are less clear.) Recent analysis of a video taken from the *Discovery*



Tier II Plus:
(spy drone)



Space Shuttle on 15 September 1991 (and described in "Star Wars over Australia?", *UFO Reporter*, Sept. 1995), appears to indicate an interference capability at Pine Gap.

- Pine Gap is completely inaccessible to members of the Australian public. The nearby Waterhouse Mountains are too inaccessible and too low to allow good overlooking. Pine Gap has been a major target for Australians in the Peace Movement protesting against foreign bases since the Vietnam War, and base security has always been extremely tight.
- Older maps show a nearby area called 'Jay Creek Aboriginal Reserve', which might have allowed non-military access to within 12 km of the base. Recent maps do not include this area, and we have been unable to find out why and when this land use change was gazetted. Presumably, this change has been allowed to further reduce public access.
- Recent maps of Central Australia no longer show access roads to, or even the name, 'Pine Gap'. However, local people and Peace Movement members report that Pine Gap is still in operation. (This creeping anonymity is exactly what happened with Area 51 maps when Groom Lake became a military test facility in the 1950s.)
- The few fragmented reports of high-speed, highly manoeuvrable objects over Central Australia that we have, are directly comparable to Area 51 reports. These suggest that US testing has been under way since 1992 (at least).

Strict security within Australia means that local UFO investigators will continue to rely on external sources for information about what is happening at Pine Gap. However, it seems inevitable that Pine Gap will feature more prominently in overseas 'Area 51' material.

