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FBI INTERROGATES UFO RESEARCHER: GOVERNMENT MAY CONFISCATE DOCUMENTS

By Brad Sparks
(CAUS Director of Research)

Two FBI men visited UFO researcher Robert Todd on the evening of July 28, 1978, he told this reporter in exclusive telephone interviews. Todd, age 24, was interrogated about his letters to the National Security Agency (NSA) for more than an hour at his parents' home in Ardmore, Pa., a suburb of Philadelphia. Todd specializes in sending freedom of information requests to the U.S. Government about UFOs.

An Air Force major advised Todd by telephone late in the day, Friday, Aug. 4, to seal in an envelope all copies of a statement about a Cuban Air Force jet allegedly destroyed while trying to shoot down a UFO in 1967. According to Todd, Maj. Gordon B. Finley, Jr., said "someone may be around" to retrieve the envelope. But, added Todd, "he didn't say when."

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"Assuming the security analyst's statement is true," Maj. Finley is quoted by Todd, "it does contain classified information." When Todd told Finley the FBI had said it was "Secret or above," Finley reportedly remarked: "I don't know about the 'or above' part, but that it is Secret--that sounds about right."

(This information reached CAUS too late to contact Finley for comment in Washington, D.C., before the weekend. Finley is chief of the Courts and Freedom of Information Branch, Air Force Judge Advocate General's Office.) *AI Hendry → Maj. Finley Aug. 8 confirmed - wouldn't say what was classified.*

① The FBI men questioned Todd about the source(s) for his requests to NSA concerning the Cuban jet mishap and the records of a former NSA *Todd Zechel* employee now active in UFO research in the Midwest. Todd said he then ^{12?} did not know of a widely disseminated UPI dispatch of Jan. 13, describing the Cuban incident.

"I explained to them," recounted Todd, "a researcher had obtained this statement, that the researcher had passed it on to the reporter ... (who) passed it on to me." Todd said he "finally broke down" and told the FBI the reporter was Robert V. Pratt of the National Enquirer. He refused to disclose the name of the "West Coast researcher" to the FBI. *Stanton Friedman quoted*

FBI spokesmen in Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia, refused to confirm or deny the interview or interest in Todd "at this time." Spokesman for NSA headquarters, at Ft. Meade, Md., would not comment on NSA's alleged role in the UFO incident or the FBI investigation of Todd.

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② Todd said the FBI men read his rights to him. Then they "tried to intimidate me," said Todd, "by citing the espionage laws and advising me of the penalties involved, namely, life in prison, or death." He added, "I was shook."

Todd sent a flurry of information requests about the Cuban incident to the Air Force, CIA, NSA, and the Navy, from February to July of this year, all without success. However, on Mar. 10, CIA suggested Todd "check with the Cuban Government for records on this incident."

Todd notified both NSA and the Air Force, on July 14, that since neither agency wished to cooperate, he would contact the Cuban Government for further information. Since he thought both agencies hinted he might have classified data, Todd asked that they "provide advice as to what information in the attached statement should not be transmitted to the Cuban Government." He gave them a 20-day deadline for replies.

"And in response to that," observed Todd, "two FBI agents knocked on my door."

Cuban Jets Incident

Details of the Cuban jets case have been obtained and pieced together by CAUS, including a copy of the widely distributed security specialist's statement. The specialist was assigned to a unit of the U.S. Air Force Security Service (AFSS), which was the 6947th Security Squadron centered at Homestead air force base just south of Miami. The squadron's mission is to monitor all Cuban Air Force communications and radar transmissions.

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One hundred of the squadron's men are assigned to Detachment A, located at Key West Naval Air Station. This forward base against attack from Cuba is on Boca Chica Key, a tropical island in the Florida Keys, just east of Key West and about 97 miles from the nearest Cuban coastline, to the south. Several such squadron units are scattered geographically to enable direction-finding equipment to locate fixed or mobile land-based radar sites and communications centers and to plot aircraft movements from flight transmissions.

One day in March, 1967, the Spanish-speaking intercept operators of Detachment A heard Cuban air defense radar controllers report an unidentified "bogey" approaching Cuba from the northeast. When the UFO entered Cuban air space at a height of about 10,000 meters (about 33,000 feet) and speed of nearly Mach 1 (nearly 660 mph), two MiG-21 jet fighters were scrambled to meet it.

(MiG stands for Soviet aircraft designers Mikoyan and Gurevich. The single-seat MiG-21UM E76 is the standard top-of-the-line fighter supplied to Soviet bloc countries such as Cuba. It is capable of Mach 2.1, or 1385 mph, in level flight, service ceiling of 59,000 feet, and combat radius of more than 300 miles on internal fuel.)

The jets were guided to within 5 kilometers (3 miles) of the UFO by Cuban ground-controlled intercept radar personnel. The flight leader radioed that the object was a bright metallic sphere with no visible markings or appendages.

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When a try at radio contact failed, Cuban Air Defense Headquarters ordered the flight leader to arm his weapons and destroy the object. The leader reported his radar was locked on the bogey and his missiles were armed. (Missiles probably were K-13A air-to-air types designated "Atoll" by NATO.)

Seconds later the wingman screamed to the ground controller that his leader's jet had exploded. When he regained his composure, the wingman radioed there was no smoke or flame, that his leader's MiG-21 had disintegrated. Cuban radar then reported the UFO quickly accelerated and climbed above 30,000 meters (above 98,000 feet). At last report it was heading south-southeast towards South America.

An Intelligence Spot Report was sent to NSA headquarters, since AFSS and its units are under NSA operational control. Such reports are standard practice in cases of aircraft losses by hostile nations. NSA is required to acknowledge receipt of such reports, but the 6947th's Detachment A did not get one; so it sent a followup report.

Within hours Detachment A received orders to ship all tapes and pertinent data to NSA and to list the Cuban aircraft loss in squadron files as due to "equipment malfunction." At least 15 to 20 people in the detachment were said to be fully informed of the incident.

Presumably, the data sent to NSA included direction-finding measurements that NSA might later combine with other sites' data to triangulate the location and altitude of the MiG-21 flight paths. If the AFSS equipment in Florida was sensitive enough, the UFO could have been tracked by its reflection of the Cuban ground and airborne radars.

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(This is beside conventional U.S. radar tracking, using our own transmitters.)

FBI Interview

Todd, who is an articulate speaker and effective writer, described the late-afternoon FBI interview for CAUS:

① "It was about 5:30 or 6 o'clock. My mother answered the door. They asked for me; they did not identify themselves. Then I came down and they flashed their identification cards. I knew what it was about as soon as I saw 'FBI.'"

The FBI men and Todd went into the living room, while Todd's parents kept their St. Bernard dog occupied outside. Todd never got the FBI mens' names.

"I had to sign a paper," continued Todd, "saying I had been read my rights." Todd said he waived his to silence because "I didn't have anything to hide."

"They started to read (the espionage laws)," but, Todd told them, "I'm familiar with them." One FBI agent said the laws carry a penalty of life in prison or death. Both men hinted at the possibility some indictments would be issued, Todd said. "It was just so shocking," Todd related.

"To tell you the truth, I had really considered quitting the whole thing (UFO research)," recalled Todd.

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Todd, who earlier warned NSA and the Air Force he might write to Cuba for details of the violent MiG-21 encounter with a UFO, said the FBI asked him if he had ever written to a foreign government. "I told them I had--the Soviet Union, no less," said Todd. "I explained it to them and let them know it was innocent."

The older FBI man said the Bureau had been asked by NSA to investigate this "matter" because NSA has no law enforcement functions, Todd recalled. The agents sat on opposite sides of Todd, who noted: "I felt like a ping-pong ball. One of them took the hard line, one of them took the soft."

The FBI men indicated they knew, or had copies, of Todd's July 14 letter to NSA with the attached security specialist's letter. They asked Todd to identify the source of the letter, and he replied "that a researcher had obtained this statement (who) passed it on to the reporter (who) passed it on to me." The question was repeated many times because, Todd said, the younger agent kept confusing the "researcher" and the "reporter." Todd said eventually he "broke down" and identified the reporter, Robert Pratt of the National Enquirer.

"I told the FBI Bob (Pratt) was going to Dayton for a UFO conference," said Todd. "They asked me where it was being held and what dates and all that. I didn't know where ..., I just knew the dates, 29 and 30 (July)."

"They asked about the researcher," said Todd. When he refused to identify him, the FBI men pressed him to reveal if he was on the east or west coasts. "So I said the West Coast--what harm could that do?" (The

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researcher is believed to be physicist Stanton T. Friedman of Hayward, Cal., who was quoted about the Cuban incident in the UPI report of Jan. 13.)

One FBI agent asked Todd if information in the source statement was ever published. "I said, to my knowledge, it had not," remembered Todd, who did not know about the UPI report until later.

Todd was not without some questions of his own. He wanted to know if any information in the source's statement was classified and at what level. The older FBI man, who Todd said bore a "granite face" and dressed in a white suit, replied: "Some of the information is classified. Most of it is b-----t."

But the younger FBI agent said he was a pilot and admitted he once had seen a UFO. He indicated "for what it was worth," recounted Todd, that "he had seen something that he could not identify." This agent told Todd the information in the statement was classified "above Secret," but later he said "it's Secret or above."

One agent asked Robert Todd, "Do you know a Todd Zechel?" Todd had asked NSA, by letter of July 10, if a W. Todd Zechel was ever employed by NSA, as was claimed in an interview published by the International UFO Reporter in May, 1978, which Todd enclosed.

The FBI men confirmed, said Todd, that the Bureau had received his letter from NSA with the interview. Todd said he does not know Zechel and he told the FBI he did not think Zechel had any connection with the Cuban incident. (Later, Todd wrote to the FBI and NSA that

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Zechel had "absolutely nothing whatever to do with the Cuban incident.")

(Zechel is director of CAUS. Zechel mentioned this reporter, Brad Sparks, by name in the International UFO Reporter interview and in such a way as to suggest association. When this reporter asked the FBI Philadelphia field division to comment on the Todd story on Aug. 1, Special Agent Roger Midkiff of the domestic intelligence section refused. But, Midkiff volunteered, "if there is something that might concern you directly, then, I'm sure that it would be brought to your attention at the appropriate time." Midkiff asked for, and was given, this reporter's phone number and address, then he said, "if there is any reason to get in contact with you, then we can.")

The question of tapping Todd's phone arose at one point. Said Todd: "I mentioned (to the agents) ..., based on the information they had given me, it seemed to me they had sufficient justification for a wiretap on my telephone. They smiled."

Todd said he told the FBI men that, under authority of the Freedom of Information act, he was going to demand the FBI file on its investigation of him. "They said they couldn't send me the information I had just given them," said Todd, "because it was classified."

Todd figures he has sent approximately 1,000 freedom of information requests about UFOs to the government since 1974, mostly at his own expense. Lately, he has been working for Charles L. Tucker, 51, of Nappanee, Ind., a mattress manufacturing executive who runs the International UFO Bureau (no connection with the independent publication International UFO Reporter).

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To make his request for the FBI file as specific as possible, Todd thought of another question for the agents: "I have read enough FBI documents to know they always refer to the subject ... by saying 'captioned as above.' Before they'd leave, I wanted to know how they were going to caption this one--Internal Security or Espionage?"

But, Todd related, the agent who replied said it was neither: "He said it would fall under 'Counterespionage.'"

A few minutes after Todd identified reporter Pratt, the FBI men got up to leave. On the way out, they again met Todd's parents, who had gathered in the dining room during the last half hour of the session. According to Todd:

"My mother asked if I was in any trouble. And (one agent) said 'no,' that I was the 'man on the end of a string.' What drama. He said it straight-faced and I think he meant every word.... Then my mother said, 'You ought to get the top guy.' She was a big help."

Official Positions

"I'm not aware of anything" about the Todd investigation said Paul B. Lorenzetti, spokesman for the FBI field division in Philadelphia, on July 31. But, he added: "I'm not cleared to gain information in such investigation.... I have very little contact with the security end of anything."

Lorenzetti reiterated, "I just don't have any knowledge of any of this," and suggested a "call back later after I have got security (to) look for it."

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The next day, Lorenzetti put special agent Roger Midkiff on the line, but first he explained: "I've already given him instructions, if there is a pending investigation ... he is not to make any comment. That is the official policy of the Bureau as far as the Attorney General's guidelines are concerned."

Agent Midkiff said that if there was an investigation, when it was completed there might be some official statement on it. Apart from such statement, he hinted this reporter might be contacted for another reason or reasons, as noted (above).

Spokesman John Perks at FBI headquarters, Washington, D.C., said on July 31 that he, too, knew nothing about an investigation of Todd: "I don't have any knowledge of this..., we're going to have to check."

Later that day, Perks' superior, Tom Coll, called and said: "We never confirm who we've talked to or who we haven't talked to.... We never do that."

Coll said near the end of his call: "Whether we have had agents talk to him (Todd) or they haven't, I don't know. But even if I did, we wouldn't confirm or deny it."

Charles Sullivan, spokesman for NSA, at its headquarters in central Maryland, was reached for comment about the Todd story July 31: "If the FBI is involved--and I'm only knowledgeable of that because you have said so--I'm not going to be responsive to you at all." He explained, "You are not going to get anything from any government agency about another government agency.... It is tough enough knowing what goes on in my own Agency."

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"I know nothing except for what you've told me," Sullivan stressed.

Documents to be Taken?

Air Force Maj. Gordon Finley reportedly phoned Todd at about 4 to 4:30 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 4. Todd recounted: "He told me he was calling because it was the last day of the 20-day time limit I had put on my request for information in my July 14 letter.... It came out to 21 days on the calendar."

Maj. Finley said the statement on the Cuban incident, if "true," included classified information, Todd related. "He asked me how many copies of the statement I had. And I asked him why he wanted to know."

Finley then told Todd to seal all copies of the statement in an envelope and that "someone" may come by to pick it up. Todd said he refused.

"I asked him what (was) the classification of the information," Todd recalled, "and he seemed very reluctant to give me that information." Todd told Finley about the FBI investigation and quoted the agent who had said "Secret or above." Finley said, according to Todd, that Secret sounded about right.

"I asked him if the Air Force was going to turn the matter over to an investigative agency," said Todd, who had the FBI in mind. "And he said 'probably.'" Finley indicated to Todd the Air Force had given his letter a lot of thought.

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