

impressive security, along with excellent facilities, and being home to the DTEO, DRA, ETPS, SAOEU and AWC made it a viable base for secret operations. The fact that the presence of the aircraft had not been detected before the incident is testament to the logic in not choosing one of the more obvious locations to be UK operating base.

If operations were restricted to night, the choice would be limited to a base that routinely maintains night operations. Night flights at Boscombe Down are sufficiently commonplace that the associated noise of what may only be one or two weekly missions would not attract undue attention.

It is likely that the UK is benefiting from information concerning the hypersonic and intelligence gathering spheres of the aircraft's operations as a by-product of the 'extraordinary relationship'. The mere fact of a UK presence, as well as various attempts at disinformation by the MoD on behalf of the Americans suggest that the decision to risk an early operational UK deployment was taken on a basis of mutual benefit, as in the early career of the U-2.

Blackbird is dead - long live the blackbird?

What of the September 1994 decision to return three of the mothballed SR-71s to service after the entire fleet was retired in 1989? The ASTRA's role and the fact that it now represents the cutting edge of technology, suggests the reactivation decision was part of a cover story developed to draw attention away from the ASTRA. The SR-71 represented the obvious 'white-world' method of displaying a renewed commitment to high-speed manned reconnaissance, though this commitment has not been welcomed by the US Air Force itself.

Retired USAF Lieutenant General Buster Glasson, who masterminded the Gulf War air campaign, summed up these feelings:

"The SR-71 was a fantastic leading-edge technology at one point in time, but we shouldn't keep trying to bring it back from the grave."

Yet it was also Lt Gen Glasson who acknowledged the 'debacle' as regards intelligence capability and gathering during the Gulf War. While in favour of UAVs (which are well suited to the loitering role), he has also said that there must not be a reliance on one piece of equipment:

"It must be a seamless intelligence system."

This would suggest that he acknowledges the continuing requirement for a high-speed reconnaissance platform. Meanwhile Major General Kenneth Israel, chief of the Defence Airborne Reconnaissance Office, has said:

"By bringing back the SR-71, we're in a position of really compromising a lot of other capability because it's expensive. We ought to take a very serious look at quickly putting that airplane down."

It is strange that the Defence Department's new Technology Development Approach includes a composite of the SR-71, merely Mach 3 capable, aimed at 2000 time frame, as well as hypersonic vehicles, one of which is a 2005 concept for a Mach 8 hydrocarbon-burning aircraft.

There is without doubt a concerted effort to disguise the fact that the ASTRA as a hypersonic capable SR-71 replacement is, in fact, already operational.

Critically Important Asset?

The CIA procured the SR-71's predecessor, the A-12. They operated the A-12s between February 1964 and June 1968 from both the USA and forward operating locations abroad. It is therefore quite plausible that the ASTRA, as an SR-71 replacement, has also been procured by, and is operated for, the CIA.

Any CIA connection presupposes the likelihood of a concerted disinformation campaign, which is certainly borne out by the circumstances surrounding the Boscombe incident.

Disinformation, as a security tool, was the key to protecting the identity of such projects as the F-117. Prior to the eventual unveiling of the F-117, disinformation began to emerge on the

so-called 'F-19', with a basic configuration which even spawned plastic model kits and served very successfully to mask the real configuration and appearance of the F-117.

The basic configuration of the 'F-19' actually approximated to the even blacker project (in the form of the ASTRA) which was then under development and which, more importantly, had not even been rumoured at that time. Dissemination of the 'F-19' configuration served to perpetuate the air of secrecy surrounding Lockheed's aircraft, but its usefulness as a disinformation tool was dependent on it being discarded when the F-117 was actually made public.

In late 1988 the F-117 was unveiled, and in 1989 the ASTRA took to the air for the first time. The 'F-19', having being exposed as entirely spurious, had been conveniently forgotten by the masses. However, it had a YF-23-like forward fuselage, inward canting twin fins, and short cropped wings, alleged to be foldable to enable carriage in C-5s - and uncanny similarity to the ASTRA. This configuration is of course dissimilar to any of those originally suggested for Aurora, which have ranged from a 90-100ft (27-30m) pure delta, to a 200ft (60m) long cross between the SR-71 and the XB-70 Valkyrie!

The NASP connection

In December 1960, NASA began a series of studies on a project then known as the Aero Space Plane, or ASP. This was a hydrogen powered, air-breathing vehicle, intended to operate hypersonically. On January 30, 1961, US Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara told the House Armed Services Committee that the USAF was developing "an advanced hypersonic manned vehicle".

Meanwhile, the A-12/SR-71 project (supersonic rather than hypersonic) was given the go-ahead in January 1960 and remained a black project until 1964. Could it be that development of an ASP was a convenient cover for development of the A-12/SR-71, given that ASP development was halted in 1965? Douglas, General Dynamics and North American had been contracted to put forward design proposals for the ASP, rather than Lockheed, whose experience with the A-12/SR-71 would surely have been invaluable, had they been able to demonstrate it. Of course, their involvement in such a project would have threatened to compromise the secrecy surrounding the A-12, and thus it may well have been the case that they were not contracted because the ASP programme was principally devised as the cover for the Lockheed project.

History repeats itself?

Over 20 years later, between 1982 and 1985, teams from the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and NASA resurrected the concept of the hypersonic Aero-Space Plane/Trans-Atmospheric Vehicle (TAV). Under the code name Copper Canyon, DARPA began a series of studies based upon a specific set of both Air Force and Navy requirements, directed towards developments of an SR-71 replacement.

Copper Canyon spawned a range of Trans-Atmospheric Vehicles using exotic propulsion systems which almost certainly included the PDWE and/or RBCC. One of the more easily adaptable concepts to emerge was the National Aero Space Plane, most often referred to as the NASP or X-30. The brainchild of DARPA's Robert Williams, it was the NASP which was announced by President Reagan early in 1986 amid a blaze of publicity. Meanwhile, Aurora received its first funding. A National Program Office was set up in Palmdale, California (home also, of course, to the Northrop Skunk Works assembly line) and on April 7, 1986, 7 million dollar contracts to study NASP airframe technologies were awarded to Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed, McDonnell Douglas and Rockwell. In October 1987 development contracts were awarded to General Dynamics, McDonnell Douglas and Rockwell, and in April 1988 the project was moved out of DARPA and into the Air Force. It was also around this time that US DoD officials were quoted in the New York Times as having revealed development plans for an SR-71 replacement.

Northrop was the only major US military aircraft manufacturer not awarded a NASP airframe study contract. This is particularly strange given that the NASP manufacturing plan included an investigation into superplastic forming, reminiscent of the type of challenge facing materials planners on the B-2. Could it be that the principal explanation for Northrop's lack of involvement was their development of the ASTRA for which NASP, just like its predecessor 30 years earlier, was providing cover? NASP was a radically different beast

to what we believe the ASTRA to be, but this is explained by the fact that it was intended to operate in orbit up to Mach 25, whereas the ASTRA has only ever been intended to operate at a maximum of between Mach 5 and Mach 8, and within the earth's atmosphere. This would mean that the airframe of the latter is likely to be radically different - much smaller than NASP, requiring much less internal fuel to power what would be a much smaller and simpler powerplant. The ASTRA's YF-23-like dimensions are borne out by the eye witness reports.

Back in 1990, NASP deputy director Bob McGuffee had tried to explain why the USA was so anxious to go it alone with NASP, rather than co-operating with the Europeans and Japan. He pointed out that "some parts of the programme are classified - partly because of possible military scenarios in the future." Mr McGuffee's words were a little misleading, because the future had, in fact, already arrived - by 1990 the ASTRA was already test flying. By the time NASP was abandoned in May 1993, it had already consumed approximately 1,400 million dollars. It is very difficult to accept that this level of investment produced no tangible results (NASP remained a 'paper' aeroplane), and much easier to believe that significant portions of it were in fact used to help fund development of the ASTRA. With this developmental work essentially complete in 1993, and operational status beckoning, NASP had now outlived its usefulness, but had certainly served its purpose.

Conclusion

Having previously been Northrop's best kept secret, we now know the ASTRA's basic shape and capabilities. It appears to be operational from both the USA and non-US locations, but its existence will remain classified for the foreseeable future. We shall have to hope that one day, just like the SR-71, the ASTRA will be allowed to enjoy the limelight.

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[UK 8]*****

Source: UFO Magazine
Date: March / April 1997

Sightings of curious triangular or wedge-shaped objects continue unabated, but could current 'unconventional' designs now on the drawing board further exasperate UFO investigators in the future? On 17 December '96, the Ministry of Defence supplied media defence correspondents with a press pack that offered an insight into future aviation research & development programmes - they provided some telling answers.

The press pack came hot on the heels of a House of Commons written answer that day. The Ministry of Defence is to spend 35 million Sterling on researching options that could lead to "uninhabited" RAF fighter bombers being flown from desk operators on the ground.

The study will help determine whether the RAF go "truly futuristic" or retain conventional designs to replace the Tornado bomber in the second decade of the 21st century.

Feasibility studies have been underway for some time, emphasised by this artist's impression of the pilotless bomber released by the MOD. Described in politically correct terms as an "uninhabited air vehicle", RAF sources told Michael Evans, Defence Correspondent for The Times newspaper, that the aircraft could be "...flown by a crew sitting at a desk; from inside a virtual reality cockpit on the ground; or while flying in another aircraft such as an E-3 AWACS early-warning plane". Another option would be to do away with the bomber altogether and replace it with air-to-ground launched missiles from "pallets in the sky" dropped by transporter aircraft.

Further exotic options are being examined which will eventually lead

to some tough political decisions in determining what role the RAF will undertake well into the next century. The very suggestion that future RAF bombing sorties might be carried out by unmanned aircraft will be treated as 'futuristic nonsense' by some, but the fact that 35 million pounds Stirling is being spent to determine whether it is a viable and practical option, should send shudders down the ranks of RAF pilots and crew. Britain and the United States have a long and rich history of sharing new technologies between their respective defence agencies and manufacturers. The recent alliance between McDonnell Douglas and Boeing will have a significant impact in future aviation research and development programmes.

While Boeing's great strength lay in its commercial arm, McDonnell Douglas has been the dominant defence manufacturing player throughout the Cold War. Faced with such a powerful technological alliance, Britain and other European aerospace contractors have now been forced to review their strategic plans for the future.

British Aerospace will be among those companies most affected by the Boeing/McDonnell Douglas merger. It may try to forge new alliances of its own, possibly with GEC, Dasa of Germany, Aerospatiale and Dassault of France. As European integration moves ever closer, commercial ties such as these will be suggested more and more by what is perceived to be a threat from the newly formed Boeing/McDonnell Douglas. Sir Richard Evans, chief executive of British Aerospace, has been advocating for years that European aerospace and defence companies need to consolidate to survive.

The real question though is how the US merger will impact on new stealth technologies currently underway between British and American defence contractors. If British Aerospace does form a grand European alliance to challenge American dominance, will the United States be willing to continue to share its stealth technology with Britain? Might we see an abrupt end to exotic aviation designs appearing other than in the United States? The key player in that argument is chief rival to Boeing/McDonnell Douglas - Lockheed Martin. It is they who are the world's leaders in stealth technologies and a surprising candidate for any possible future partnership with British Aerospace.

The British company has a long established rapport with its American counterpart, and while the rest of Europe (and especially France) hesitates, the temptation to forge an alliance with Lockheed Martin will become ever greater. If such an alliance were to occur, that would greatly displease pro-European supporters who fear it would damage an already weakened defence and aerospace sector and thwart their ability to compete on level terms with Boeing/McDonnell Douglas.

World News

[W 1]*****

Source; BBC Ceefax
Date: Thursday 3rd April 1997

Space probe sees possible signs of life

Signs of life may have been spotted by a space probe on two of Jupiter's moons, scientists have disclosed.

The Galileo spacecraft is thought to have caught glimpses of organic molecules containing carbon and nitrogen on Ganymede and Callisto.

These two elements are vital components of living things.

The discovery does not necessarily point to the existence of life, but the possibility cannot be ruled out.

[W 2]*****

Source: The Times Interface newspaper
Date: Wednesday 12th March 1997

Bold journey for a crewless craft

Nicholas Booth

For many years TV viewers have followed Deep Space Nine, the Star Trek spin-off, as it boldly goes on journeys through space and time. Now Nasa scientists are preparing a mission called Deep Space One

which will fly past an asteroid and a comet after launch next summer.

Although unmanned, Deep Space One will carry the most advanced artificial intelligence software ever sent into space. The software, known as Remote Agent, is being described by its designers as a step on the way to the kind of voice-activated, intelligent computers which the Star Trek crew would use.

"The goals of the Remote Agent development are twofold: to reduce the cost of exploration and to extend exploration to realms of space where no ground-controlled craft could venture," says Dr Bob Rasmussen, a computer autonomy expert at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California, which is developing the mission.

The Remote Agent software will correct on-board problems by reasoning with itself to find out what has gone wrong. The large distances involved in planetary exploration mean that communications from Earth take too long to arrive during emergencies.

Sometimes spacecraft have to hibernate for months when they pass behind the sun, as seen from Earth.

Deep Space One is part of Nasa's continuing efforts to develop smaller, less expensive spacecraft able to fly autonomous missions at a cost of less than 100 million dollars per voyage. The Remote Agent software means the mission can be controlled by less than a dozen ground controllers instead of the hundreds of people currently used to run a major space mission. Other missions in the programme will include a Mars lander, a mission to Venus and an advanced mapping mission from Earth orbit.

The Remote Agent software comprises three packages which, Nasa officials believe will reduce costs by 60 per cent back on Earth. One, known as High-Level Planning and Scheduling, will anticipate "goals" rather than detailed instructions for the weeks ahead. The fault protection part of the software is named Livingstone after the legendary explorer and acts as a virtual chief engineer.

If something goes wrong, Livingstone uses models of how the spacecraft should behave under the circumstances. A final portion of the software, Smart Executive, executes the minute details from the Planning and Scheduling goals.

Nasa scientists have also ensured that if the spacecraft malfunctions, ground controllers could perform the equivalent of a labotomy.

[W 3]*****

Source: (letters page) UFO Magazine
Date: March/April 1997

Dear Sir,

While reading an article about Area 51 I came across some information which was new to my eyes. Apparently George Knapp of KLAS TV in Las Vegas has in his possession, videotape testimony of a man who organised several big military operations out of Nellis AFB in Nevada, or Area 51. The man claims that the American government has aquired alien technology and bodies since the 1950's. Unfortunately, this tape will not be screened until the man has died. Can you shed any further light on this?

From: Paul Schwar, London, England

Editor: I don't recall George Knapp saying anything other than he hopes the canned interviews will be broadcast later in the year. What I can promise those attending his lecture at London's Imperial College on the weekend of 21-22 June is some quite remarkable revelations and film footage aquired from Area 51 and two trips to the former Soviet Union that will have the audience on the edge of their seats.

uk.ufo.nw says: If any of you out there have any further details on the videotape's and interviews mentioned please mail us. Also we would like to hear from anyone who manages to get along to see George Knapps lecture in London. Mail us at: ufo@holodeck.demon.co.uk

[W 4]*****

Source: The Times Interface newspaper

Date: 26th February 1997

Spaceship that bodily goes and goes and goes

Twenty-five years ago this week Pioneer 10 was launched on the first space voyage to the stars, its mission to explore only as far as Jupiter (Nicholas Booth writes.)

But this pioneer just kept on going and is now 10 billion kilometres distant on the edge of the solar system - and still travelling at speed, relative to the sun, of 12.5 kilometres per second. Despite the distance involved, Nasa's Deep Space Network - large radio antennae dotted around the Earth - is still picking up Pioneer 10's signal, although it now takes 18 hours, 32 minutes and 37 seconds to be sent and confirmation returned.

The craft is powered by a small lump of plutonium which is decaying but still generating enough heat to keep the craft going in the freezing depths where the Sun is only a bright star.

But Pioneer 10 now transmits back to Earth with a power of only 8 watts and by the time the signal reaches Earth, it has dissipated to one sextillionth of a watt.

To hear this faint whisper from the edge of space, the electronics have to be chilled by liquid hydrogen to remove even the noise of molecules which would otherwise drown the signal.

Now Pioneer 10's long run is coming to an end. Nasa plans to switch it off in March because of funding cutbacks.

<http://pyroeis.arc.nasa.gov/pioneer/PNStat.html>

[W 5]*****

Source: The Daily Mail newspaper
Date: Wednesday 19th February 1997

Where 20 pounds buys you plenty of space

Land speculators are being offered a real bargain - 640 acres plots for just 20 pounds each. The catch is that the properties are on Mars. The land is being 'sold' by a company using the Internet. A spokesman for the firm said: "Any dispute about ownership will be settled with any future government of Mars."

[W 6]*****

Source: The Sun newspaper
Date: Friday 28th March 1998

(note: this incident has been widely publicised on television news and other newspapers)

39 kill themselves in pact to join aliens aboard huge UFO hiding behind the comet

>From Caroline Graham in San Diego

Thirty-Nine members of a bizarre cult killed themselves to join aliens in a huge spacecraft hiding behind comet Hale-Bopp, it was revealed yesterday.

The tragic weirdos - all computer fanatics - were told by their 6ft 7in guru: "We must go to a higher place - It is time to shed the containers that other, less wordly, ones call bodies. The spaceship is behind the comet."

The astonishing story behind the mass suicide was unravelled yesterday by a former member of the Higher Sorcery sect.

Known only as Rio, he said he received two "farewell videos" on Wednesday which had been taped by cult members last Friday.

He told his boss: "One was recorded by the leader, Father John Doe - He told how the comet was a sign they were to leave this Earth and travel to a higher planet."

Bodies

"The other tape was from my friends, saying goodbye. They said, 'Do

not be upset. We are calm and at peace with ourselves. We are ready to go'."

After watching the videos Rio contacted police saying: "Please see if my friends are ok. I'm scared."

Officers rushed to a secluded 1 million pounds mansion in the megarich Californian town of Rancho Santa Fe, 20 miles north of San Diego.

They found the bosies of 39 men and women - all aged between 16 and 28 - lying on their backs in rows.

Their arms were at their sides and each person had a purple shroud folded into a triangle covering their face.

There were no signs of physical injury and it was believed the victims died one by one after taking overdoses of sleeping tablets during the week-long period when Hale-Bopp was closest to the earth.

As corpse after corpse was carried from the luxury home at 18241 Colina Norte a horrified cop said: "I have never seen anything like it - the bodies were everywhere. They looked like they were asleep."

Another cop said the scene inside the house "chilled me to the bone." He added "All the victims were wearing identical black trousers and black training shoes.

They were lined up in precise rows with their arms by their side. Some of them were on mattresses, others on beds.

They were in several rooms but the thing that struck me was how neat and peaceful the scene was.

It was almost as if they had measured the distance between themselves to make sure everything was perfect.

The house was spotless. There was not a cup or saucer out of place. The cushions were plumped up. It was eerie."

Rio's shocked boss Nick Matzorkis, of the Interact Entertainment Group, said: "Rio left the group a month ago - he turned to me with a white face seeing the tapes. His hands were trembling. He said, 'They've done it'. - One 15 minute tape was from the cult leader. He looked about 70 years old and had staring eyes. - He said they were going because they believed the comet was a sign. - He said, 'The space craft is behind the comet. Others cannot see it but to us, it is a sign. When it gets close enough, we will leave to join it'."

Another source described the charismatic, grey-haired chief - only ever referred to as Father John of Father Doe - as "like Lurch from The Adams Family".

Last night police were still trying to trace the mysterious figure.

In America, John Doe is the name used by police for unidentified corpses.

Matzorkis, 39, went on: "Rio said they believed the UFO would take them to a place called Sirius. - He said the cult members were all computer nerds who followed the leader with a religious zeal. - He left because he thought they were getting too weird. None of the members smoked, drank or had sex. They had to keep 'pure' to travel onwards to this higher level. - Rio told me, 'They think the aliens will take them to Sirius which has much higher life forms than earth'."

Shocking

Sirius is know as the Dog Star - and is the brightest in the night sky.

The deaths in one of America's biggest mass suicides stunned the nation. President Bill Clinton said last night: "It's heartbreaking, it's sickening, it' shocking."

The Higher Source cult operated as a business which designed interactive Internet pages for companies at around 20,000 pounds a time.

And, although no suicide notes were found at the house, the sect

left a grim message on its own Worldwide Web site, called Heaven's Gate.

It included a drawn picture of an alien, with the words: "This is what we believe our friends out there will look like."

The website referred to previous mass suicides, including the deaths of 81 Branch Davidians at Waco, Texas, in 1993. And it said: "We fully expect and look forward to boarding a spacecraft to go to a higher place. - We believe a time will come when we leave our physical vehicles and move on." The rambling explanation of the cult's beliefs went on: "The keys to heaven's gate are here again in Ti and Doe, the UFO two, as they were in Jesus, the father 2,000 years ago. Hale-Bopp's approach is the marker we've been waiting for, the time for the arrival of the spacecraft from the level above humans to take us home to their world."

The crop-haired Higher Source members treated their nine-bedroomed mansion like a temple.

People living nearby were unconcerned by the neat, smartly dressed organisation which settled with ease in a town reputed to have more millionaires per square mile than any other in America.

The house, complete with heated swimming pool and floodlit tennis courts, was rented from Iranian born Sam Koutchesfahani, who was anxious to sell it.

Estate agent Bob Dyson, 43, showed would-be buyers around last Thursday.

He said: "The cult members made me take off my shoes and put on surgical slippers. No one spoke apart from the cult leader. -The other men and women were like robots. They were all dressed the same and had identical crew cuts. They referred to each other as brother and sister. - They told me the house would not be available for viewing this week because they were planning 'religious ceremonies' including a ceremony of death. I thought they were harmless wackos."

Customers of the sect's company described it as businesslike.

One of them, San Diego Polo Club manager Tom Goodspeed, said last night: "I had a working relationship with six or seven members of the group. They were very soft spoken, quiet and some of the most pleasant people I've ever worked with."

Superstitious societies have long believed that comets herald impending doom.

And a rumour that a UFO has trailed comet Hale-Bopp has been circulating for months on the Internet.

But experts say an object photographed by an amateur astronomer was really a star distorted by the optics of his telescope.

[graphic depicts page from the sects website]

Red Alert Hale-Bopp Brings Closure to: HEAVENS GATE

As was promised - the keys to Heaven's Gate are here again in Ti and Do (The UFO Two) as they were in Jesus and His Father 2000 yrs. ago.

Whether Hale-Bopp has a "companion" or not is irrelevant from our perspective. However, its arrival is joyously very significant to us at "Heaven's Gate." Their joy is that our Older Member in the Evolutionary Level Above Human (the "Kingdom of Heaven") has made it clear to us that Hale-Bopp's approach is the "marker" we've been waiting for - the time for the arrival of the spacecraft from the Level Above Human to take us home to "Their World" - in the literal Heavens. Our 22 years of classroom here on planet Earth is finally coming to conclusion--"graduation" from the Human Evolutionary Level we are happily prepared to leave "this world" and go with Ti's crew. If you study the material on this website you will hopefully understand our joy and what our purpose is.

[also in this article]

Man Who Saw Omen of Doom

By Rachel Bletchley

Prophet Nostradamus predicted the Hale-Bopp comet would be an omen of doom more than 400 years ago.

The 16th century astrologer wrote: "The sky will burn at 45 degrees in the Millenium as the Apocalypse approaches."

Academics who interpret his writings believes that refers to the brilliant comet which sparked the San Diego cult to commit mass suicide.

They say Hale-Bopp will "burn" - or be closest to the sun - during April at a position of 45 degrees latitude.

Horrors

Nostradamus predicted the Apocalypse, or the end of the world, in July 1999.

An astonishing number of the French soothsayer's predictions have apparently come true.

He is said to have forecast the rise of Hitler, the Second World War, the horrors of the Gulf War and a "wicked tyrant" - Saddam Hussein.

Students of his books say he also foresaw the AIDS epidemic, civil war in Yugoslavia and the Great Fire of London.

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