

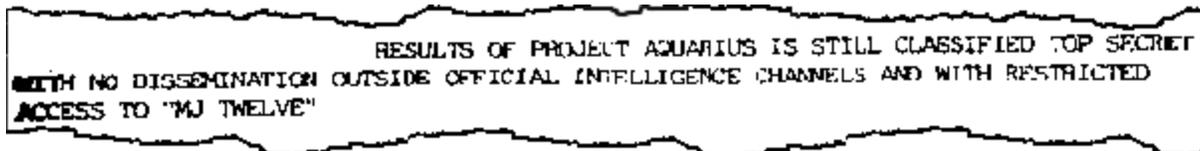
Pursuit of Project Aquarius

cufon.org/cufon/Aquarius/aquarius.htm

BACKGROUND

Irrevocably connected to the Paul Bennewitz case is a document which has been called many things including "bogus." It is usually known as either "The Aquarius Document," or "The NASA (or NSA) Telex." The name of a supposedly highly secret UFO related project, "Aquarius" appears in the unverifiable Telex:

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RESULTS OF PROJECT AQUARIUS IS STILL CLASSIFIED TOP SECRET
WITH NO DISSEMINATION OUTSIDE OFFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CHANNELS AND WITH RESTRICTED
ACCESS TO "MJ TWELVE"

California researcher William L. (Bill) Moore first had the Telex. He has claimed that he received the telex from U.S. government agents in February, 1981, and that the Telex as we know it is a "retyped" (changed) version of an original message Moore had been shown earlier. New York Attorney Peter Gersten made the document public later that year.

Interested researchers then tried to verify or refute the Telex and the information in it. FOIA requests produced information indicating that the Telex was not a legitimate government cable, at least in the form it was distributed. Whether or not the telex was a total fabrication remains unknown, but many if not most, researchers now believe it to be. Although much of the information in the Telex has been shown to be incorrect or false, certain items therein have some validity. It was this aspect of the Telex that most interested us: how much of the information in the Telex was correct and how did come to be so. This article addresses our pursuit of "Project Aquarius."

Late in 1985, researcher Chris Lambright received an FOIA response letter from the National Security Agency (NSA) in reply to his query about three project names. Two of the projects were dismissed in the reply, but Project Aquarius was treated separately and differently. The NSA FOIA letter asked for \$15,000 up front to perform a Project Aquarius records search with no promise of results. This was a tantalizing suggestion of possible substance in Project Aquarius.

Lambright then requested the "goals" of Project Aquarius. The NSA replied that 'even the release of the project name could reasonably be expected to cause grave damage to the national security,' and therefore was properly classified. This language was straight out of the section on the Top Secret classification of the Executive Order which established the classification system, Executive Order 12356. Confirmation! Project Aquarius existed and was classified Top Secret!

Despite repeated attempts through the FOIA over the intervening years, nothing more about Project Aquarius was obtained from the NSA.

In 1996 we decided to take another tack in our pursuit of Project Aquarius. Although earlier FOIA requests citing information published in 1990 by Bill Moore and Jaime Shandera were unsuccessful, using this information, we were finally able to produce

significant documentation on a Project Aquarius conducted by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). This broke a long silence on the matter. The nagging question is when and how did William Moore (or the fabricators of the Telex) know of this project and it's name - or did he?

DARPA Project Aquarius Documents Released

We obtained several Project Aquarius reports. Under FOIA case number 96-F-1327, DARPA, through the Assistant Secretary of Defense, released the following:

- **AD 507423 Project AQUARIUS Quarterly Report, 2 March 1970 (EDL-6900)**
- **AD 513725 Project AQUARIUS Special Report (EDL-M1380)**
- **AD 509068 Project AQUARIUS Annual Report, 1 June 1970**
- **AD 515288L Project AQUARIUS Final Report (EDL-E184)**
- **AD 514939L Proceedings of the MAY BELL Technical Workshop of 18-22 May 1970.**

In the Introduction to Report AD 507423, Project AQUARIUS is described as:

"... a part of the ARPA sponsored ocean surveillance program under Project MAY BELL. The primary goals of Project AQUARIUS are to experimentally demonstrate the feasibility of detecting both submarine launched ballistic missiles and low-flying aircraft and to compare the experimentally observed detection ranges to theoretically predicted detection ranges."



Project MAY BELL, the umbrella project under which Aquarius existed, is described in the Executive summary to report AD514939L as:

"...directed towards ocean surveillance and tactical early warning and is investigating the feasibility of detecting and tracking aircraft, missiles, ships and submarines at over-the-horizon distances using high frequency monostatic and bistatic radar."

Further Efforts - NSA

Immediately upon receiving the DARPA Project Aquarius/Project May Bell material, we filed a new FOIA request with the NSA hoping that with the release of the DARPA material, NSA would see fit to release the material they are withholding. In reply to a FOIA request sent in June 1997 clarifying our request, we received another denial from the NSA; see the text of NSA reply letter dated 14 July 1997.

Of course we appealed the NSA denial. A few additional tidbits of information were contained in the NSA response letter dated 27 November 1997.

We learn that the material NSA is withholding from release "... describes an NSA database coincidentally called Aquarius." And it "...does not relate to Defense Advance Projects Agency (DARPA) records pertaining to a Project Aquarius as released by the Department of Defense (DoD), nor does it relate to any other DoD project. It is not a Project Aquarius document." This is further to previous NSA assertions that their Aquarius is "...not UFO-related."

Analysis and Comment

Is Project Aquarius UFO-Related?

The DoD Project Aquarius revealed in the released reports was a research and development effort to "see" over the horizon with radar for information gathering and threat detection. It is not UFO related as the Telex suggests.

Does this mean that the Top Secret NSA Aquarius material isn't UFO related either? Although we do not know for sure, NSA has claimed that it is not.

It is plausible that the high NSA classification is intended to protect installations, intelligence sources and methods of intelligence collection. These are the exemptions claimed by NSA to justify non-disclosure. These arguments are weakened by the passage of years and by the openness initiatives taken by the U.S. Government in recent times.

The Telex, supposedly part of a government disinformation campaign run on Paul Bennewitz, could not be verified through normal channels, yet contained some correct information of a secret nature. How could this come to be? Although "Aquarius" could be a random choice for a project name by those who fabricated the Telex, the situation fits perfectly with the definition of disinformation:

Deliberately misleading information announced publicly or leaked by a government or especially by an intelligence agency in order to influence public opinion or the government...

To be effective, disinformation must contain enough truth to convince those who give just a superficial look, and enough to make those better informed wonder. If the inclusion of the project name "Aquarius" was a disinformation tactic, an application of "containing enough truth...", then it was effective. For over a decade, pursuit of Project Aquarius records has occupied some of many investigator's time and effort. Had this time and effort been spent on other pursuits, perhaps we would know more about other things today.

If the use of "Aquarius" was part of a disinformation effort, then those who created the Telex would have had to have knowledge of classified government information.

The Telex mentions "MJ TWELVE" in the same sentence as "Project Aquarius." Since the Telex predated the release of the original MJ-12 papers, it is our opinion that the creators of the Telex designed it as groundwork for the later release of the MJ-12 briefing document. There is no indication in the DoD released reports of any association with "MJ-12" or any UFO related matters, and the NSA asserts that their Aquarius is nor UFO related.

How Many Projects Aquarius?

In his 1990 book, Bill Moore mentions three apparently different Projects Aquarius, ("Aquarius A," "Aquarius B," and "Aquarius C,") and a small amount of information was given about "A" and "C." Some of this information turns out to be correct, some does not. Enough was correct to identify and obtain the DARPA reports released.

Our research shows that Bill Moore's "Aquarius A," and "Aquarius C" are the same Department of Defense (DARPA) project.

And Then There Were Two...

Until we received the DARPA Project Aquarius material and the most recent FOIA reply letter from the National Security Agency, we could not be sure whether more than one Project Aquarius exists or existed. This question plagued us and other researchers for more than a decade.

While it is true that Department of Defense project names are assigned from a register and are not duplicated, and the U.S. Air Force insists that project names are not duplicated, NSA informs us that "NSA database and project names are not obtained from a coordinated DoD registry..." This leaves the possibility open for more agencies which also do not use the DoD coordinated name registry using the name Aquarius.

We've located two agencies holding documents related to "Aquarius," we suppose it's possible there are, or were, more.

Classification Levels

Then there's the matter of classification levels. None of the released DoD material was classified above the level of Secret. Some passages, a few of which included the name of Project Aquarius, were even unclassified at the time, if not available outside those with clearance for the DARPA Aquarius material classified Secret.

As mentioned above, the wording of one of the early NSA FOIA responses: "...can reasonably be expected to cause grave damage to the national security..." is verbatim from (now superseded) Executive Order 12356 for the classification level of Top Secret. A direct statement in a NSA response letter reveal that the classification level of the NSA Aquarius "database" has been reduced to Secret, but it still remains classified.

Conclusion?

We now have direct evidence that the Project Aquarius conducted by DARPA was not UFO related. But we are left with the question of whether or not the NSA Aquarius database is UFO related. Again, NSA has stated that it is not.

If the still withheld NSA Aquarius information is not UFO-related, then the inclusion of the name "Aquarius" in the Telex was either an effective diversionary disinformation tactic, or a random selection by the creators of the bogus 1980 Telex. A close shave with Occam's razor might suggest the later, but the question of by what mechanism did the creators of the Telex obtain the name of an (at the time) classified project remains open.

NOTES:

- Material attributed to William Moore and/or Jaime Sandera are from ***The MJ-12 Documents, An Analytical Report*** by William L. Moore and Jaime Shandera, The Fair Witness Project Inc., 1990
- Background material may be found in:
 - Chris Lambright's fine series: ***Intrusions on Sandia...***
 - ***The Ice Documents Press Conference***
 - And in ***FOCUS***, Vol.4 (New series): Issue 4-5-6, June 30, 1989, Fair Witness Project, Inc., (single edition)

