

**UFOs: Myths, Conspiracies, and Realities** by John B. Alexander. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, 2011. 305 pp. \$25.99 (hardcover). ISBN 9780312648343.

It is said that the truest test of a man's intelligence is how much he agrees with you, and I find that Dr. Alexander and I share a great number of opinions. I looked first at the chapter about Philip Corso, who claimed an inside knowledge of the Roswell UFO crash and the government plans to exploit the find by seeding recovered material into American industry. Here Alexander writes not only from his experience in the Pentagon and classified operations, but as a friend of Corso. He spoke with him in the weeks prior to Corso's death. But Alexander found many holes in the stories spun by Corso, and in the end, while acknowledging Corso's long military career, did not truly believe him. Here Alexander and I agree.

What was more fascinating was Alexander's discussion of Congressional hearings about UFOs, and what disclosure would accomplish. Writing as an insider who has experience in this arena, Alexander suggested that neither hearings nor disclosure was going to happen for reasons he carefully lays out.

One of those reasons was what almost any of us have observed ourselves. UFOs are a third rail in politics (though Alexander suggests they are tar-like), meaning that almost any expression of belief is the same as admitting to a belief in the Easter Bunny. He provided examples of what happened after UFOs were mentioned in a debate with former presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich. From that point on, while commenting on Kucinich's political ideas and theories, pundits found they had to remark on UFOs, always in a derogatory way. The UFO connection might have nothing to do with Kucinich's political statements, but it was brought in anyway, as a means to discredit him.

On disclosure, the idea that the U.S. government has many classified UFO documents to release, Alexander noted that there was nothing to actually disclose (an idea reinforced by a recent White House announcement that the government held no classified UFO files). The official investigation of UFOs by the Air Force had been released decades ago, and a great number of the files and records from the now closed Project Blue Book are online, available to everyone.

Alexander scoffs at the idea of MJ-12, that is, the super secret committee supposedly created by President Truman after the Roswell UFO crash. Unlike so many others who suggest the documents are faked based on analysis of the documents themselves, Alexander's attack is about the way they entered into the public consciousness. Using Watergate as an example, he notes that the Watergate investigation was built on solid

evidence from sources known to the reporters, while MJ-12 is built on anonymous documents sent to an obscure movie producer. In leaks of real documents, those documents can be examined, the sources verified, and the information corroborated. With MJ-12, there are no original documents, there are no sources, and the information seems to be a hodge-podge of real data taken from historical sources rewritten to include references to MJ-12. Here again, Alexander and I agree.

And we certainly agree on his analysis of the Air Force-sponsored University of Colorado study of UFOs known to many as the Condon Report. He chides science for its refusal to look critically at the results of the study, which he describes as badly flawed. He notes that scientists continue to use the study to prove that nothing of scientific interest could be learned from a true examination of UFOs, when the contrary is true. He suggests that many of the case studies cited by the Condon Committee were cursory at best and certainly inadequate for a true scientific analysis. Although he doesn't mention it, one of the cases in the Condon Committee report was concluded suggesting that it was caused by a phenomenon so rare that it had never been seen before or since. They don't bother to identify that phenomenon. Alexander suggests that scientists actually read the report before relying on it to prove there is nothing of value in UFO research.

Where we part company is in his analysis about the Roswell UFO crash case. He writes that he now subscribes to the Project Mogul answer. According to him, "While the Air Force report, *Case Closed*, provides conflicting information regarding classification, most of those involved agree it [Project Mogul] was both Top Secret and strictly compartmented." While the ultimate purpose, to spy on the Soviet Union, was classified, the balloon launches and the equipment in New Mexico were not. For the launches in June, 1947, the balloons were standard neoprene weather balloons and the radar targets were foil-covered devices known as rawins. The name of the project, contrary to what has been said many times by many other sources, was not classified and appeared in Dr. Albert Crary's unclassified diary published in the Air Force study. Announcements of the launches were required by the CAA (forerunner to the FAA) because the balloon arrays could be a hazard to aerial navigation. Pictures of the balloon arrays were published in newspapers around the country on July 10, 1947. So much for a highly classified project.

What struck me most about this short segment of the book was how he let the sources get away from him. In other places, he carefully named sources and their credentials. As an example, when writing about an intercept of a UFO by an American pilot stationed in England, he told us it was Lieutenant Milton Torres, who eventually earned a doctorate in

mechanical engineering, that Torres taught at the university level, and he was a very credible source who had been sworn to secrecy about his UFO encounter. We learn all that we need so that we might verify what Alexander has written if we feel the need to do so.

With Project Mogul, we are not so blessed. In writing about the strange symbols reported by Jesse Marcel, Jr. (whose credentials are also carefully laid out for us), Alexander said,

What was learned was that on the reflecting panels had been placed a specially designed code that could only be read by the people with access to the key. More important, it was stated that this code was not alphanumeric as are most that are frequently employed, but entailed the use of glyphs.

In all my discussions with project engineers and others associated with Mogul, including Charles Moore who claimed he had “launched the Roswell UFO,” this was never mentioned. The best the Air Force could do was suggest that a flowered tape from a novelty company had been used to reinforce part of the rawin targets, but they produced nothing to prove it. If I wanted to verify Alexander’s new claim, I could not. Alexander did not provide the source for this unique bit of information.

For me, this discussion of Roswell was the big disappointment here. While Alexander chastised others for accepting much of the nonsense published in the UFO field including those scientists who make statements without bothering to learn the facts, this seems to be what Alexander has done in the Roswell case. He accepted the story of glyphs without proper analysis.

That said, this is a book that needs to be read and understood by all those inside the UFO community and by everyone who has an interest in these topics. Yes, he is going to annoy everyone regardless of their personal beliefs with his opinions about UFOs. His insider status and his knowledge of how things work in both the world of congressional hearings and in the world of military classification provide an interesting insight that those pushing for congressional hearings and full disclosure should read.

For the most part, his use of names, dates, sources, and personal experiences lend an even stronger note of credibility to his work. While he doesn’t use footnotes, he provides the source material in the text. It is clear that he knows what he is talking about, and that he has, for the most part, the sources and data to back it up.

Here is a book about UFOs that is a must read for everyone. And if we disagree about the Roswell case, well then, we disagree about Roswell.

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