



Part 5 - Peculiar Phenomenon: Early United States Efforts to Collect and Analyze Flying Discs

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- Las Cruces Sun-News, May 16, 1947

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Trouble in the Desert

The German Vengeance-2 (V-2) rocket gathered momentum and accelerated from White Sands Proving Ground's (WSPG) "Launch Complex 33" to a maximum speed of 1,700 meters per second all data appeared nominal. The rocket climbed to an intermediate altitude of 40 miles. Radar technicians assigned to U. S. Army Ordnance watched in amazement as an unidentified target suddenly appeared next to the ascending missile. [Source: *United States Civilian Space Programs*, 1958-1978, p. 166.]

Earthfiles, news category.

Almost as quickly as the unidentified object appeared, the V-2 changed course and took a northeasterly track that brought the rocket crashing to Earth two minutes later, six miles east and slightly north of Alamogordo, New Mexico. The date was May 15, 1947. That crash site was 40 degrees off the V-2's projected flight path. That rocket flight achieved an altitude of 80 miles and was terminated by a WSPG safety officer who activated an explosive detonator on the rocket's fuel lines. The time elapsed from V-2 launch to impact was only five minutes. [Source: *Las Cruces Sun-News*, May 16, 1947, "V-2 Goes Astray," p. 1.]

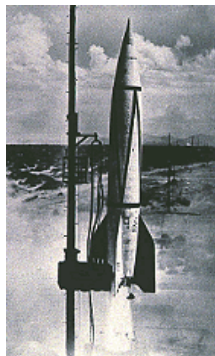
That was the 26th launch of 67 total V-2 flights as of that May 15th date and began what would evolve over the next forty-eight years into the most highly classified military and scientific program in American history. The unexplained interaction between the unidentified objects and highly classified American rocket tests was more highly classified than the Manhattan Engineering District (MED) project that culminated in the detonation of the first American atomic bomb test in July 1945 at the "Trinity Site," 100 miles northwest of the V-2 rocket tests. In my confidential interviews with inside sources, I was told the laboratories of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) worked on the UFO phenomenon as they had on the Manhattan Project. [Source: *SEAFARER ELF: Communications System, Draft Environmental Impact Statement* by U. S. Navy, Naval Electronic Systems Command, Washington, D. C., 1977, Book 3, Figure 11.]

It has been suggested to me that the reason for such a high security classification about the UFO phenomenon is that the United States still does not fully understand the intentions of the intelligence in the aerial discs. The U. S. will not disclose we are working on defensive systems or our own to counter the disc capability. It has also been said to this author that any disclosure about the existence of the disc research and development effort will be countered by U. S. government security agents who are assigned to misinform without regard to constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech in order to protect "at all costs" an American policy of denial about disc crashes and retrievals of bodies and technologies in the interests of national security.

The Commander at White Sands Proving Ground, Lt. Col. Harold Turner, U. S. Army/Ordnance, was at a loss to explain what had happened to the May 15, 1947, V-2 launch, but he told the press that "peculiar phenomenon" was responsible for the erratic test flight that came very close to crashing into the middle of the New Mexico town of

Alamogordo, 55 miles up range from the V-2 launch complex. [Source: *Las Cruces Sun-News*, May 16, 1947, p. 1.] "There were no clues to the cause of the missile's behavior," Col. Turner said and refused to speculate further about the V-2 rocket's crash.

V-2 Rocket Mysteriously Veered Off Course at White Sands Proving Ground on May 15, 1947



V-2 rocket developed by German scientists in Project Paperclip
at White Sands Proving Ground (WSPG), New Mexico, after WWII.

[Editor's Note: According to the U. S. Naval Laboratory website, "After World War II, parts of almost one hundred German V-2 rockets were brought to the United States. The U.S. Army undertook the task of assembling the rockets at White Sands, New Mexico, for research and experimentation by government agencies and universities. In 1946, the Naval Research Lab was invited to participate in the Army's V-2 rocket program. As an established group ready to carry out upper atmospheric research, the Laboratory became the prime agency for conducting research with the V-2 program and for developing the technology to carry out the missions. Eighty experiments were performed between 1946 and 1951."

The V-2 research program moved fairly quickly, with flights scheduled at the White Sands Proving Ground, New Mexico. The first static engine test firing of a German V-2 on U.S. soil occurred on March 14, 1946. The missile used for this engine test became the first German V-2 launched in the U.S. on April 16, 1946. The U.S. V-2 series of launches concluded in 1952. Some of the launches employed V-2 missiles equipped with scientific instrumentation designed to study the upper atmosphere. These types of V-2 launches were managed by the V-2 Upper Atmosphere Research Panel, which was established in January, 1947 and evolved into the Upper Atmosphere Rocket Research Panel in March, 1948.

In the history of the V-2 rocket program, an internet archive called *Encyclopedia Astronautica* states: "1947 May 15 V-2 Flight Launched 16:04 local time. Reached 135.5 km. Carried cosmic and solar radiation, temperature, ionosphere, photo experiments for Naval Research Lab. (V-2) Landed east of the impact zone on the outskirts of Alamogordo, New Mexico."]

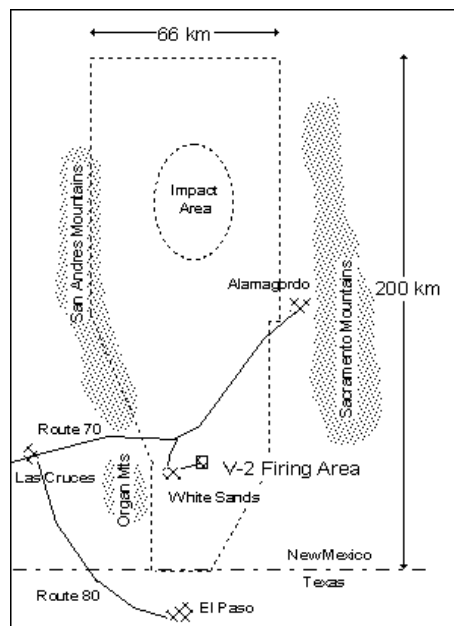


Front Page, *Las Cruces Sun-News*, Las Cruces, New Mexico, May 16, 1947.

The May 16, 1947, edition of the *Las Cruces Sun-News* reported about that event: "Lt. Col. Harold R. Turner, White Sands Proving Ground commanding officer, today blamed 'peculiar phenomena' for the erratic test flight of a German V-2 rocket which landed only six miles east of Alamogordo yesterday afternoon."



Lt. Col. Harold R. Turner, Commander, White Sands Proving Ground (WSPG), July 9, 1945 to August 3, 1947. Photograph courtesy White Sands Missile Range (WSMR).



Map of White Sands Proving Ground V-2 Firing Area by Mark Wade.

'Peculiar Phenomena' Is Blamed as V-2 Rocket Goes Astray

The German V-2 rocket, launched at White Sands Proving Ground, Thursday afternoon, landed only six miles east of Alamogordo, at the town of Indian

Front Page, *Las Cruces Citizen*, Las Cruces, New Mexico, May 22, 1947.

There was more reported in the May 22, 1947, edition of the *Las Cruces Citizen* : "'Peculiar phenomena' was blamed by Lt. Col. Harold R. Turner, commanding officer of White Sands, for the erratic test flight. The rocket carrying a warhead installed by the Naval Research Laboratory, was spotted at its landing about 55 miles from the launching site where it was fired at 4:09 p.m. A crew was sent out immediately to retrieve rocket

body and warhead."

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Front Page, *Las Cruces Citizen*, Las Cruces, New Mexico, May 22, 1947.

With the exception of the two local newspapers, this V-2 and "peculiar phenomenon" incident was never reported outside of southern New Mexico and west Texas. Several weeks later, following another unplanned "missile impact" after it veered off course, the May 15, 1947, launch incident was mentioned in a few other published reports. But in a recently written history of the V-2 program, no mention is made of the 26th V-2 launch on May 15, 1947. Nor was there any mention of the 18th V-2 launch on July 10, 1947. There were only half a dozen words about the 27th launch on May 29, 1947. There was no mention of an attempted V-2 launch on July 3, 1947. [Source: *Science With A Vengeance* © 1992 by David Devorkin, p. 96.]

From the time of rocket impact and for an undetermined period afterward, White Sands Proving Ground was on security alert and "locked down." [Source: *Las Cruces Sun-News*, May 20, 1947, Front Page.] Movement of civilian and military personnel to and from the base was restricted. Road blocks were established east of Las Cruces, New Mexico, and west of Alamogordo, New Mexico, on U. S. Highway 70 and south towards El Paso, Texas, on War Road.

**Secrecy Shrouds
Test of American
Rocket This Week**

Secrecy continued to shroud plans for a flight test of an American-designed and built rocket, scheduled for some time this week at White Sands Proving Ground, according to Army sources in Washington with officials at the proving ground offering no comment on developments there.

Movements of military and civilian personnel to and from the proving ground have been restricted for several days, but Capt. A. P. Brazil, public relations officer there, described that as part of a "normal operation." He said Lt. Col. Harold R. Turner had no comment to make at this time.

Guard Against Espionage

Capt. Turner also had nothing to say about an Associated Press dispatch from Washington which said: "Tight military secrecy has been clamped around previously announced Army plans to start flying American-built rockets at the White Sands Proving Ground."

The first launching takes place some time this week, but military men refused to say just when. One officer said there was a possibility of espionage and it would be entirely too easy to observe proceedings with a telescope.

There have been reports that an all-American rocket, developed by the Navy and capable of doubling the altitude attained by German V-2 rockets (114 miles) at the proving ground, would be tested this spring. This rocket has been dubbed unofficially the "Neptune."

No Name for Rocket

The rocket to be tested this week, however, is apparently a different one, for Commander R. B. McLaughlin, navy installation commandant at the proving ground, has announced that tests of the Neptune will begin in July.

From Washington, the AP said the Army declined to name the new missile. Newsmen, the dispatch said, have remedied that by calling it the "Secret Sergeant."

Las Cruces Sun-News, May 20, 1947, Front Page.

[Editor's Note: From today's White Sands Missile Range military history fact sheets, the chronological list of V-2 rocket launches by date are not complete, as shown below. Note the 2-month time gap after May 15, 1947, and the 5-month time gap after July 29, 1947. Note also the missing May 29, 1947, launch that went off course and crashed near Juarez, Mexico, as well as no mention of an attempted July 3, 1947, launch.

January 10, 1947, for Naval Research Lab (NRL) to study cosmic radiation.

January 23, 1947, for General Electric Co. (GE)

February 20, 1947, for Air Research and Development Command (ARDC) to study pressure, ionosphere, sky brightness.

March 7, 1947, for NRL to study cosmic radiation, pressure, temperature.

April 1, 1947, for Applied Physics Lab (APL), Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, to study cosmic and solar radiation.

April 8, 1947, for APL to study cosmic and solar radiation.

April 17, 1947, for GE to study pressure and temperature for SCEL.

May 15, 1947, for NRL to study cosmic and solar radiation, temperature, ionosphere.

July 10, 1947, for NRL to study cosmic radiation, pressure, temperature, ionosphere, biological for Harvard.

July 29, 1947, for APL to study cosmic and solar radiation.

October 9, 1947, for GE to study solar radiation for NRL and pressure and composition for SCEL.

December 8, 1947, for ARDC to study pressure, temperature, solar radiation, sky brightness, ionosphere.]

Search lights were installed in mountain passes surrounding the headquarters area and the V-2 launch complex. MPs were stationed outside the perimeter of WSPG itself. One Army officer, wishing to remain anonymous, said there was a possibility of espionage. "It would be entirely too easy to observe the proceedings at WSPG with a telescope."

[Source: *El Paso Times*, May 21, 1947, Front Page.]

V-2 Rocket Interference Upsets OSRD and JRDB

Whatever had mysteriously appeared and vanished after observing a V-2 in flight and which effected the rocket's trajectory at a highly classified missile test range became an immediate priority within a small closed circle of highly ranked general staff officers and civilian scientists assigned to the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) in the Office of Emergency Management, Executive Office of the President (EOP). OSRD had overall responsibility for its sub-projects: White Sands Proving Ground, Los Alamos Scientific Lab and Sandia Base.

There was also the Joint Research and Development Board (JRDB) of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), under whose authority White Sands Proving Ground was established and operated. [Source: *SEAFARER ELF: Communications* by U. S. Navy.]

Both OSRD and JRDB, national weapons research and development organizations, were headed by one key man: Dr. Vannevar Bush, listed as MJ-2 on the President-elect Briefing Paper for Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Dr. Bush was also President of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, D. C. from 1939 on and was the only Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) over its seven year history. OSRD was established in 1940 and reportedly dissolved in September 1947. OSRD designed and produced the first radar, the atomic bomb, and the variable time and radio-controlled artillery proximity fuses. In October 1948, Dr. Bush resigned as Chairman of the Research and Development Board (RDB) of the Secretary of Defense and the chairman position was replaced by Dr. K. T. Compton, then-President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). [Source: *The New York Times*, October 6, 1948, Front Page.]



El Paso Times, May 21, 1947, Front Page.

Continued in **Part 6** - Unidentified Aerial Objects Defined as "Hostile."

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