



### Part 6 - Peculiar Phenomenon: Early United States Efforts to Collect and Analyze Flying Discs

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#### Trouble in the Desert (cont.)

The Deputy Commanding General of the Army Air Forces and Air Chief of Staff, Lt. General Ira C. Eaker, had been on hand to observe the launch. General Eaker's Vice Chief of Staff was General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, identified in the MJ-12 document as MJ-6, who in 1946 was U. S. Director of the Central Intelligence Group (CIG), immediate forerunner of the CIA established by the National Security of 1947. General Vandenberg (MJ-6) was returned by the CIG to the Army Air Forces in January 1947 and given the assignment of Vice Chief of the Air Staff. He was subsequently promoted shortly after this test to Chief of the Air Staff, upon General Eaker retirement.



USAF Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker.

Retired Aug. 31, 1947; died Aug. 6, 1987.  
Photograph courtesy U. S. Air Force.

Those especially concerned about the peculiar object's appearance included the U. S. Army Ordnance and the Naval Research Laboratory who were based at WSPG; the National Antiaircraft Artillery School at Ft. Bliss, Texas; and the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project (AFSWP) at Sandia Base, Albuquerque, established on January 1, 1947. AFSWP was responsible for nuclear weapons security at all U. S. nuclear weapons repositories. The AEC designed, fabricated, assembled and tested all of the U. S. nuclear weapons from its base at Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory (LASL) 300 miles north of WSPG launch row. No one knew what the peculiar phenomenon was, but its appearance along side launched V-2 rockets was not good.

[ Sources: *El Paso Times*, May 14, 1948; *Who's Who in America*, Vol. II, 1951-1960; *The Central Intelligence Agency: An Instrument of Government to 1950* © 1990 by Arthur B. Darling, Pennsylvania State University Press; *Sandia National Laboratories* © Furman, p. 216.]

Speculation centered on the peculiar phenomenon being a long range Russian reconnaissance aircraft or drone, possibly launched from Mexico to observe and/or obstruct United States V-2 tests. If that were true, then the U. S. was in trouble because the

phenomenon had not been detected prior to V-2 launches on America's heavily monitored missile test range. Recorders attached to an array of tracking radar assessing the rocket's performance and film from a battery of high speed ground cameras was reviewed. German scientists included Werner Von Braun who was brought to Ft. Bliss to support the V-2 program at White Sands, with the encouragement and support of Dr. Vannevar Bush (MJ-2). Dr. Von Braun witnessed the troubled launch along with other scientists who worked with the Naval Research Laboratory, including Dr. James Van Allen from Johns Hopkins APL. The German scientists were asked if they had developed such technology during WWII. But none could explain the peculiar phenomenon.

The object that had appeared next to the launched V-2 was defined as "hostile" since it appeared to have caused the rocket to veer off course. Therefore, that unidentified disc was considered to be an advanced foreign weapon system. Effort would be expended to guard against further over-flights and high priority would be assigned to collect a sample of the technology for further analysis, covertly if possible.

[ Sources: *The New York Times*, June 7, 1947; confidential source at WSMRI who told this author that launch rules preclude missile tests after an unauthorized aircraft has been detected in WSPG air space; *Las Cruces Citizen*, May 18, 1947; Devorkin, *Science With A Vengeance*, p. 47; *Las Cruces Sun-News*, May 16 and May 20, 1947.]



SERGEANT TALKS WITH GENERAL—Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker (left), air chief of staff, talks with S/Sgt. Robert F. Morchouse of Biggs Field as the deputy commander of the Army Air Forces visited here Wednesday. —(Official AAF Photo.)

*El Paso Times*, May 15, 1947.

Believing that the peculiar technology was probably Russian, the Army would attempt to withhold the information so that the Soviet Union would be unaware of the American accomplishment - capturing a high technology, long-range reconnaissance aircraft. The U. S. Army Ordnance and National Antiaircraft Artillery School at Ft. Bliss, Texas, had primary responsibility for collecting a specimen. The Army Air Forces Material Command at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio, supported the Army's effort by providing a more sophisticated antiaircraft weapons system from site "KINGMAN" at Wendover, Utah.

The implications of the object's appearance were both strategic and tactical. An air platform that could instantaneously appear, bring a weapon to bear, and then disappear over the southern continental U. S. without warning could, in theory, appear anywhere (e.g., nuclear weapons laboratory, uranium processing plant, a nuclear weapons storage site, a battlefield) at any time. It could observe and attack its targets at will. Its intrusion might be momentarily detected, assuming that the military or industrial target had antiaircraft surveillance and tracking technology like the Proving Ground, but none did. Considering the state of the art in antiaircraft weapons, it would be difficult to defend against. The peculiar phenomenon apparently enjoyed complete freedom of movement and could select from a wide variety of military or industrial targets a number more critical than even the SECRET V-2s.

Brig. General Robert M. Montague (MJ-11) was the Army's foremost expert in antiaircraft weapons and tactics and was Director of the Antiaircraft and Guided Missile Branch of the National Antiaircraft Artillery School at Ft. Bliss in northern El Paso, Texas, 35 miles south of WSPG. General Montague, identified as MJ-11 in the Majestic 12 leaked document, was promoted to command the AFSWP at Sandia Base on July 11, 1947, four days after the covert military operation began to recover the Corona "flying disc." The

AFSWP at Sandia Base was established at Kirtland Field in Albuquerque, for the purpose of maintaining, transporting, storing and securing all U. S. nuclear weapons. It is believed that Sandia Base, following successful recovery of the first flying disc, would act as a flying disc custodian. That custody might possibly be at a repository in the Manzano Mountains in central New Mexico. The repositories would be protected from air attack by Gen. Montague (MJ-11). Operating under the proword WATERSUPPLY, the U. S.'s first two underground nuclear weapons repositories were completed by March 1948. The third underground complex was completed by the fall of 1948. It is believed that one of the first two completed sites was within 100 miles of the "Roswell" (Corona) flying disc crash site. It was under construction in the summer of 1947.

After the May 15, 1947, V-2 rocket crash, Gen. Montague was brought to the Proving Ground with Major General John J. Homer, Commander of Ft. Bliss, to review the evidence of the peculiar phenomenon.

[ Sources: *Las Cruces Sun-News*, May 20, 1947; confidential interview with Source 1 from the Boston scientific community in 1976.]

General Montague's (MJ-11) assignment not only included training antiaircraft artillery officers and crews, but also a secondary mission providing antiaircraft security for WSPG. It is believed that General Montague deployed Ft. Bliss antiaircraft artillery around the Proving Ground. General Montague's troops would have primary responsibility to guard future tests and collect a sample of the technology for further analysis. The Army Air Forces at Alamogordo Air Field were placed on heightened alert and directed to watch for unknown airborne intruders. In cooperation with Lt. Col. Turner, General Montague requested a more rapid deployment of a new surface to air missile reportedly manufactured by Boeing Aircraft Co. The "GAPA" surface-to-air missile system was publicly reported to be two years old and operated under the auspices of the Technical Branch of the Air Material Command at Wright Field, Ohio (that became Wright-Patterson AFB), commanded by General Nathan Twining (MJ-4), with a program site at Wendover, Utah.

[ Source: *Las Cruces Sun-News*, July 24, 1947.]



*The El Paso Times*, July 25, 1947.

Rocket Testing Activities Concentrated in Southern N.M., As Air Force Interceptor Missile Fired at Alamogordo		
<p>The rocket business is picking up in southern New Mexico. Tabbed as a key phase of the nation's military preparedness program, guided missiles research has been in progress nearly a year and a half at the nearby White Sands Proving Ground.</p> <p>Now the Army Air Forces are consolidating a separate set of rocket experiments at the Alamogordo Army Air Field.</p> <p>Announcement of the transfer of Boeing aircraft facilities and equipment for the work to Alamogordo coincided with the first launching of one of the company's experimental GAPA missiles here yesterday.</p>	<p>Scheduled right on its heels was the firing of another German V-2 rocket today at White Sands. Work there is the joint enterprise of the Army Ordnance Department and the Navy, with the cooperation of scientists and commercial laboratories.</p> <p>Results of yesterday's GAPA shoot—the projectile is designed to track and destroy enemy aircraft aloft—were described officially as excellent. Details were not made public.</p> <p>The air materiel command said its year-old GAPA program would be discontinued Aug. 1 at Wendover, Utah, where 38 others have been tested. Plans to test five to</p>	<p>eight missiles a month here were announced.</p> <p>An Ordnance spokesman had stated earlier that White Sands research soon would be shifted to American-built missiles "far superior" to any employed by the Nazis. Over two dozen rebuilt German V-2s already have been fired there, one to a record of 114-mile altitude.</p> <p>There also have been numerous—and less publicized—launchings of smaller American rockets at White Sands. One remains as secret that its name, size and other details still are withheld. Negro men have dubbed it the "secret sergeant."</p>

Las Cruces Sun-News, July 24, 1947, Front Page.

Continued in **Part 7** - Project Y's TOP SECRET "KINGMAN" Nuclear Test Staging Area

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