



Part 7 - Peculiar Phenomenon: Early United States Efforts to Collect and Analyze Flying Discs

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of WSPG Launch Row." - J. Andrew Kissner*

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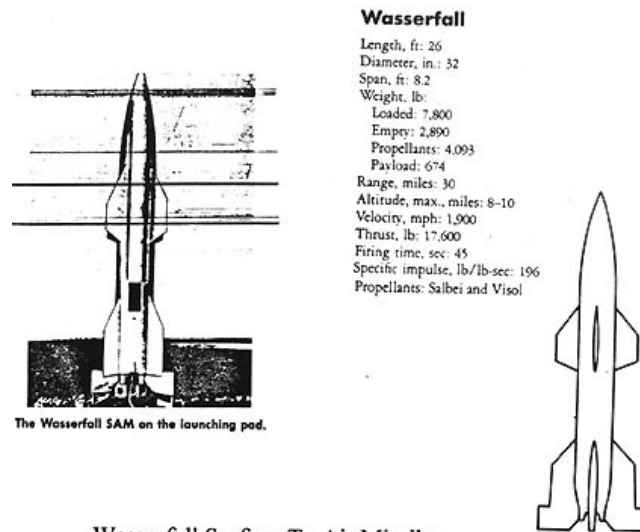
Trouble in the Desert (cont.)

Wendover Field and "GAPA" Program

Wendover Field was the site of Project Y's TOP SECRET 'KINGMAN' nuclear test staging area in the isolated desert in western Utah near the Bonneville Salt Flats. The U. S. Army Air Force's first atomic bomb element, the 509th Bomb Group, trained at KINGMAN under code name "CENTERBOARD." That was prior to its relocation to Tinian Island for the atomic bomb missions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is the same 509th Bomb Group based at Roswell, New Mexico, following their return from the Pacific Theater of Operations.

The 509th Bomb Group worked directly with the AEC's Z Division at Sandia Base in Albuquerque to field test new atomic weapons designs following WWII. This is the same 509th that allegedly transported flying disc debris related to the "Roswell incident" from Walker Field in Roswell, New Mexico, to San Antonio, Texas, for further shipment to the AMC at Wright Field outside Dayton, Ohio. Several key members of this decorated and prestigious Army Air Force group over the past two decades have come forward to confirm that something very odd happened at Walker Field in Roswell during July 1947. [Source: *Sandia National Laboratories, The Postwar Decade* © 1990 by Necah S. Furman, Univ. of New Mexico Press, p. 93.]

Nuclear weapons flying components were assembled under the direction of Project Y personnel in KINGMAN's fabrication shops. The Army Air Forces conducted the tests. Later, the data gathered from the tests was analyzed at LASL. KINGMAN'S LASL scientific and technical personnel evolved into LASL's Z Division. AMC/Wasserfall surface-to-air missiles were evidently tested and perhaps installed around the AEC test and assembly facilities at KINGMAN.



Wasserfall Surface To Air Missiles

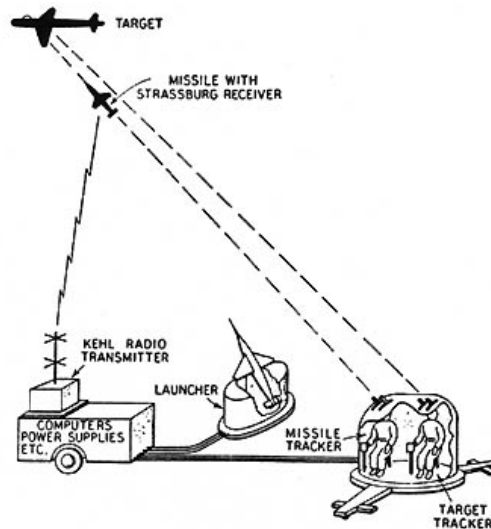


Fig. 2-13 Elements of the Burgund Guidance System for Surface-to-Air Missiles.

In published newspaper accounts of the era related to the "GAPA program," Major General Nathan Farragut Twining (MJ-4), Commander of the Air Material Command (AMC) at Wright Field, Ohio, is mentioned as providing the functional authority to move and redeploy the surface-to-air missile system to WSPG. General Twining's assignment immediately prior to assuming command of the AMC was Commanding General of the 20th Air Force which was the Army Air Forces headquarters unit responsible for the 509th Bomb Group during WWII in the Pacific Theater of Operations. General Twining, identified in the Eisenhower MJ-12 document as MJ-4, would become Chief of Staff of the U. S. Air Force in 1953 and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1957 to 1960. [Sources: *The New York Times*, June 7, 1947 and April 3, 1954.]

The GAPA system reportedly had a range of thirty miles, could achieve a maximum 114-mile-altitude and deliver a 674-pound high explosive warhead. When fired at a mobile airborne target, GAPA was expected under some scenarios (not even worst case) to depart the Proving Ground in the direction it was fired. Unless the target was directly north over WSPG property, there was a good possibility that the missile would fall outside the Proving Ground "fence line." So, it was necessary to have witnesses on site that would verify that the rocket was a V-2 if the mission was to be done secretly. (The U. S. Army did not want the Russians to know that we had "secured" one of "their drones.") It was also necessary to make-up a V-2 failure story if the missile went off WSPG.

No record has been found related to an American GAPA surface-to-air missile program from any source other than 1947 newspaper reports. The first operational U. S. surface-to-air missile reported in current literature is the Nike Ajax manufactured by Western Electric, Douglas Aircraft and Aerojet General. This is definitely not the system reported in New Mexico newspapers in May 1947. Michigan's "Project Wizard" SAM effort was installed at Alamogordo Army Air Field, but had not developed a workable prototype at the time.

It is believed that the GAPA program reported by General Twining is a SAM system based upon the German "Wasserfall" design collected with German V-2s in occupied Europe.

Wasserfalls were one-third scale copies of the V-2, with the addition of four control surfaces eleven feet rearward from the warhead section. The Wasserfall was aimed and controlled using a single "Rheinland" targeting system composed of one radar, a direction-finding device, a control transmitter and a comparator-computer. It was a mobile system that used a wheeled transport dolly. The Wasserfall propulsion system was substantially different than the V-2's, even though by appearance they looked similar. The Wasserfall relied on high pressure nitrogen gas to feed Visol-Salbei propellants into a fuel mixture regulator. Prior to injection, the Salbei oxidizer (acid) circulated through the chamber's cooling jacket. Chamber pressure was 280 psi. Exhaust velocity was 4,250 mph. [Source: Ordway, *International Missile and Space Guide*, pp. 96-97.]

General Electric's first Hermes missile, A-1, was based on the Wasserfall surface-to-air missile design. This appears to continue to be a secret of the U. S. military. In 1981, a NASA administrator testified before a Congressional committee and mentioned that the Hermes A-1 was based on the German Wasserfall, a surface-to-air missile design. This is the only reference to this fact in all the published literature I've studied. Why would this be secret?

Germany planned to produce 5,000 Wasserfalls per month in 1945. We can assume that the AMC had an ample supply of these missiles and their components for study. It also appears that the Antiaircraft School at Ft. Bliss possessed operational systems. The first test of the GAPA at WSPG was reported to be the 40th launch of the Ground-to-Air Pilotless Antiaircraft system (GAPA). But no *published* literature could be found concerning a GAPA system. [Sources: United States Civilian Space Program 1958-1978, p. 167; *The New York Times*, June 7, 1947.]

Mobile Wasserfall missiles would be tested under partially controlled conditions at WSPG, even if they were fired at a potential enemy target. Construction of launch and test facilities for several different surface-to-air missile systems at the Proving Ground had been underway since March 1947, six miles east of White Sands National Monument and 30 miles northeast of WSPG headquarters along U. S. Highway 70. This deployment represented an acceleration of a previously approved test program. The question: would the mysterious radar target reappear at the time of the next scheduled V-2 launch set for May 29, a date mentioned by Col. Turner to a local newspaper reporter on May 16? [Sources: Ibid.]

In July 1947, reportedly as a result of the AMC's mission to develop surface-to-air missiles for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Alamogordo Army Air Field was transferred to the AMC from the Army Air Force. Within days of the purported discovery of a flying disc near Corona, New Mexico, Alamogordo AAF became an AMC installation commanded directly by General Twining (MJ-4) at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio. [Source: Hsi and Panitz, *From Sundaggers to Space Exploration*, p. 308.]

First WSPG Test of Wasserfall Surface-to-Air Missile

On May 22, 1947, it appears that the first modified Wasserfall surface-to-air missile was fired from White Sands Proving Ground launch row. In the literature concerning the era written four decades after the rocket test, the missile was identified as a "Corporal E, MXX774." [Sources: Ibid.; Devorkin, *Science With A Vengeance*.] This firing exceeded expectations of program officials according to Lt. Col. Turner. The next two MX774 firings, however, were reported to be complete failures. Another source present during the first test reported that the first launch was a total failure. It is believed that the missile detonated in the air during the course of its first WSPG test flight. [Source: Ibid.]

American-Built Rocket Gets First Test at WSPG

An American-designed and built rocket got its first flight test at White Sands Proving Ground yesterday afternoon, and Army Ordnance experts called the test a success today, according to a report from Lt. Col. Harold R. Turner, released by the proving ground's public relations officer, Capt. R. L. Brazio.

Thus the airproud of secrecy thrown about the test was dropped a little, although the announcement still left the rocket unnamed, gave no indication of its size or construction and withheld details of its performance.

Secrets in Development
Col. Turner's announcement said the missile is the largest and first controlled rocket to be completely designed, developed and successfully fired in this country.

The missile is one of a series in a step-by-step development program leading to new weapons of this type, the announcement said. The rocket, dubbed "Secret Sargeant" by newsmen when the Army declined to give it official designation, is classified as a military development item, Capt. Brazio said, and details are not being made public at this time.

Next V-2 June 12
Reports that another new rocket would be fired next week were denied, but date of the next V-2 rocket firing, June 12, was announced.

Previous experiments have been confined largely to launching the German V-2's.

Capt. Brazio released Col. Turner's statement since the proving ground's commander was in El Paso where his wife died Tuesday night. Funeral services were to be conducted for her there this afternoon.

Col. Turner's official announcement refuted reports heard last night that the rocket's launching had not been "very successful." Those same reports said the rocket was about half the size of a V-2 and resembles a "Neptune," the Navy's new rocket which is to be tested later this year.

Las Cruces Sun-News, May 23, 1947, front page.

Col. Turner publicly reported on May 23, 1947, that the first test flight of the "All American" rocket - "the first in a new series of missile" - had been a success. At the same time, Col. Turner contradicted his earlier statement and denied that a V-2 launch was planned for May 29. Col. Turner insisted that the next V-2 launch would be June 12, 1947. [Source: *Las Cruces Sun-News*, May 23, 1947.]

Secretly, Army Ordnance and a Ft. Bliss antiaircraft artillery unit began preparing a V-2. It is believed that a modified Wasserfall antiaircraft missile was placed on its mobile transport dolly for a May 29, 1947, firing in the vicinity of Launch Complex #33. Security remained tight at the complex. A Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, Hanson Baldwin, was invited to attend a May 29, 1947, V-2 launch, along with Major General Homer of Ft. Bliss and Lt. General Leonard T. Gerow, Commandant of the U. S. Army's Command and General Staff School at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas.

At the time, Hanson Baldwin was the military affairs editor at *The New York Times*. In later years, he was identified as a member of both the NSC 5412/1 Committee and the "Quantico Study Group." He wrote many of *The New York Times* articles about the V-2 program, surface-to-air defense, intelligence collection, psychological warfare and was the principal writer to review the National Security Act of 1947 for the *NYT*. [Source: *Ibid.*; *The New York Times*, May 30, 1947.]

Apparently Col. Turner felt that there was reason to misinform the local media that a V-2 launch would be attempted on May 29, 1947. The SECRET launch was scheduled for 11:00 a.m., but was delayed until 4:00 p.m. A V-2 launch was reported to have been attempted and aborted at 4:00 p.m. that day before the invited guests. Then, the launch was called off indefinitely at 4:10 p.m. Both Generals returned to their respective commands, while reporter Baldwin returned with General Homer to Ft. Bliss 35 miles south of WSPG. [Source: *Ibid.*]

At 5:30 p.m. local MST on May 29, 1947, a Navy Helldiver flew over WSPG and crash landed at Las Cruces Airport, 25 air miles west of WSPG Launch Row. The cause of the crash was reported as "a failure of the plane's hydraulic landing gear." Within 30 minutes at approximately 6:00 p.m. MST, a second plane commanded by a student pilot overturned as it attempted to land at the same airport. [Source: *Las Cruces Sun-News*, June 1, 1947.]

About an hour later at 7:15 p.m. MST, it is believed that at least one Wasserfall surface-

to-air missile, complete with a 674-pound high explosive warhead, was fired at one or more unidentified radar targets hovering to the southwest of WSPG Launch Row. At approximately 7:20 p.m. when the warhead was at an altitude above 60,000 feet, the proximity fuse detonated ten miles north and slightly west of Mt. Franklin. [Source: *El Paso Times*, May 30, 1947.]

Continued in **Part 8** - Another Strange V-2 Crash Near Juarez, Mexico

Credits

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