



Part 2: CIA, UFOs and Hollywood

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"If you've got government agencies working in Hollywood covertly to improve their own images, that's not only a bad use of funds, it's also fundamentally anti-Democratic and wrong." - Matthew Alford, Ph.D.

theguardian

An offer they couldn't refuse

The CIA is often credited with 'advice' on Hollywood films, but no one is truly sure about the extent of its shadowy involvement. Matthew Alford and Robbie Graham investigate



Matthew Alford and Robbie Graham
The Guardian, Friday 14 November 2008

"The Deep Politics of Hollywood," a 3-part article by Matthew Alford and Robbie Graham. Only Part 1 was accepted for publication by **The Guardian** on November 14, 2008, after editors changed the original title, "Spooks and the Silver Screen," to "An Offer They Couldn't Refuse."

Earthfiles, news category.

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December 22, 2008 Bristol, England - On December 17, 2008, Earthfiles reported an interview with Robbie Graham about a November 14, 2008, co-authored article in Britain's *The Guardian* that was the first part of a three-part series. Robbie's writing partner is Matthew Alford, Ph.D., who earned his degree in 2008, from the University of Bath focused on Film and Propaganda. Matthew is now a lecturer in film at the University of Bristol's Department of Drama: Theater, Film and Television. His Ph.D. thesis was entitled, "A Propaganda Model for Hollywood? Representations of American Foreign Policy in Contemporary Films." Matthew is also author of a forthcoming book, *Projecting Power: American Foreign Policy and the Hollywood Propaganda System*.

Interview:



Matthew Alford, Ph.D., Lecturer in Film, Dept. of Drama:
Theater, Film and Television, Univ. of Bristol, Bristol, in South West England.

Matthew Alford, Ph.D., Lecturer in Film, Dept. of Drama: Theater, Film and Television, University of Bristol, Bristol, in South West England: "My work focuses on the relationship between Washington, D. C. and Hollywood and looks at what kind of

political content is in films produced from 1990 to the present day, plus some historic classics, and what kind of content they have had politically. I found that all of the films I researched pretty much without exception presented American foreign policy in very benign terms, presenting America as a good power and also as an entity that used force appropriately. When America did use force, it was effective and led to peace, democracy and security. So, that was my initial research looking at all these films about what kind of content they had.

Then I asked myself what would cause that? Why is Hollywood so de-radicalized in its approach to American foreign policy. Why is it basically very positive about American power. I found a lot of things about American society and western society in general that meant these films would be de-radicalized. One of those is the influence of the Department of Defense, the CIA and other agencies.

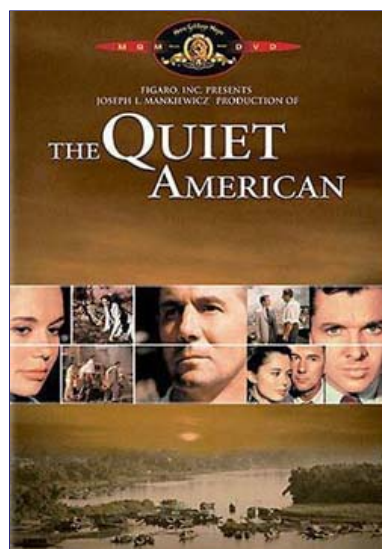
WHAT IS STRONGEST EVIDENCE YOU HAVE FOUND OF CIA INFLUENCE THROUGH HOLLYWOOD FILMS?

The strongest evidence that the CIA influences Hollywood films is from its own records and its own admission. The CIA has been very clear that since 1996, it set up its own official entertainment industry liaison, the CIA's own office that contacts and maintains relationships with Hollywood producers. Whenever different films are made, filmmakers often come to the CIA and ask for advice. That's just clear. It's even clear in a CIA website search of CIA and Hollywood.

The way the CIA presents that, though, is to say, 'We're just providing advice and nothing more.' For instance, on the film, *Meet the Parents* with Robert De Niro, the CIA can say, 'We showed them how a lie detector works for that particular scene in the film.' That's a benign example.

But we can make a pretty good guess from history that the CIA's relationship with Hollywood that the CIA is making rather more serious alterations, changes and requests in movies. For instance, we have a film like *Animal Farm* from the 1950s, which was backed by the CIA and provided with at least several hundred thousand dollars by the CIA and distributed by the U. S. Information Agency (USIA), which is closely connected to the CIA. That film was anti-Communist propaganda. That comes from lots of research on the internal record. That's also the case with the original George Orwell *1984* film, again from the mid-1950s.

Also, the original film of *The Quiet American* from 1958. Edward Lansdale, a famed CIA operative whose life was a model for the CIA character in the film, contacted the film's director by letter and asked for certain changes to be made, which were then done. In the feature film version, because of Edward Lansdale's intervention, his character is changed from being a manufacturer of plastic explosives, which he distributes in order to stoke up a fascist force in Indochina, to being a manufacturer of plastic children's toys. This completely contradicted the anti-war intent of Graham Greene's original novel. That's why Greene denounced the film as propaganda.



Video cover for *The Quiet American*, based on Graham Greene's best-selling anti-war novel, and released in 1958.

[Editor's Note: *Wikipedia* – "*The Quiet American* was the first film adaptation of Graham Greene's best-selling novel of same title released in 1958. The film was directed and the script was written by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, with uncredited input from CIA officer, Edward Lansdale. The

Hollywood film was also dedicated to the U.S.-backed president of South Vietnam who took office shortly after the novel's publication. Graham Greene was furious that his novel's anti-war message was taken out of the Hollywood movie and he disavowed the Mankiewicz film as a 'propaganda film for America.'"



February 6, 1908 - February 23, 1987.
Edward Geary Lansdale was a USAF officer who served
in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the CIA.

"Lansdale rose to the rank of Major General, was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal in 1963. In the 1990s interest in Lansdale was sparked, in part, by the inclusion of a character named 'General Y' in the 1991 Oliver Stone Hollywood film, JFK. It was implied that Lansdale was General Y, who allegedly directed the covert operations to assassinate President John F. Kennedy (JFK) on November 22, 1963. This theory was inspired by questions raised about Lansdale's presence in Dealey Plaza by a former colleague, L. Fletcher Prouty, who claimed to have recognized Lansdale in a photograph taken that day by a *Dallas Morning News* photographer immediately after the assassination. The photo allegedly shows Lansdale walking away from 'the three tramps' who were arrested by Dallas police."]

More modern examples are detailed in our November 14, 2008, *Guardian* article. We can look at a film like *The Recruit*, with Al Pacino. We can only guess at the pressures and alterations the CIA brought to bear on that film. There's also *The Good Shepherd* from 2006, the Robert De Niro film about CIA counterintelligence and James Jesus Angleton (head of CIA's Counterintelligence from 1954 to 1974).

Also, the 2007 film *Charlie Wilson's War* is about the U. S. efforts to supply the Afghan mujahideen with weaponry during the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. Retired CIA agent Milt Bearden was an adviser on that Hollywood production. [Bearden was selected in 1986 to take charge of the CIA covert action mission to support Afghan resistance.] In fact, Bearden was talking about going around the mountains of Afghanistan with actor Robert De Niro firing off guns and drinking tea. The 2003 book by George Crile implied a link between American supply of arms to Afghanistan and 9/11. But the Hollywood film painted a less incriminating, more patriotic picture. What exact changes were made in this film under CIA influence? We don't know. In fact, it's extremely difficult to find out.

[Editor's Note: *Wikipedia* - A Mujahid is a Muslim involved in *Jihad*, a war. The plural is *Mujahideen*, Arabic for struggle. The mujahideen were significantly financed, armed and allegedly trained by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan administrations. The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) was the inter-agent used in the majority of these activities to disguise the sources of support for the resistance. Under Reagan, U.S. support for the mujahideen evolved into an official U.S. foreign policy, known as the Reagan Doctrine, which included U.S. support for anti-Soviet resistance movements in Afghanistan, Angola, Nicaragua and elsewhere. Reagan praised mujahideen as 'freedom fighters,' and three mainstream Western films portrayed the mujahideen as heroic: the 1987 James Bond film, *The Living Daylights*; the 1988 *Rambo III*; and the 2007 biographical movie, *Charlie Wilson's War*.]

FOIA Requests: NASA Letter and CIA in Hollywood

I've put in FOIA requests to the CIA about their filmmaking liaison and also submitted to

NASA about the Steven Spielberg alleged 20-page letter concerning *Close Encounters* back in 1977, which you discussed with Robbie recently.

It's been two or three months and we haven't heard back from them. Supposedly, we were to hear something within a month or so, but we're still waiting.

THE RESPONSE DELAY INDICATES THE SUBJECTS YOU ARE INQUIRING ABOUT ARE HOT BUTTONS IN THE FOIA SYSTEM?

Yes, that would be an inference we could make. It does seem suspicious that we haven't received any reply about these FOIA requests, particularly the really simple ones. I am so frustrated that the CIA press department has not got back to me at all and I ended up writing a one-line letter just saying, 'Could you tell me how many people work in your office?' I figured that's the kind of question and answer they can't actually say, 'This is taking a long time to find the answer to your inquiry because there are so many documents to go through.'

All they have to do is count their staff and reply! But I haven't had any answer to that question either.

So, whether that's indication of conspiracy or simply that they are not interested in actually being genuine with the Freedom of Information process, I don't know.

YOU ARE TRYING TO GET A COPY OF THE NASA 20-PAGE LETTER TO STEVEN SPIELBERG, CORRECT?

That's right. I've gotten an automated response from NASA, which said, 'We're looking into your inquiry.' But nothing more has emerged. The delay could simply be a bureaucratic thing. I certainly would not leap to any conclusions at this point that it's a sign that authorities are covering something up, but it's certainly a frustration for me, the researcher! At least it shows, I think, they are not that keen on spending a great deal of time and resources on providing information that might show the CIA and NASA worlds in a bad light. That's not surprising. It's just the way powerful systems work.

Beyond "The Lies Are Out There"

BEYOND *THE GUARDIAN'S* NOVEMBER 14, 2008, PUBLICATION OF YOUR *DEEP POLITICS OF HOLLYWOOD: PART 1 - SPOOKS AND THE SILVER SCREEN*, WHAT ARE YOUR OTHER PARTS 2 AND 3?

The Guardian changed our 'Spooks' title to 'An Offer They Couldn't Refuse,' a title Robbie and I don't completely understand.

Then the next two parts under the overall title, 'The Deep Politics of Hollywood' are 2) the UFO focused one, 'The Lies Are Out There;' and 3) 'In the Parents' Best Interests' about Hollywood as a system where the power is in the parent companies that own Hollywood studios. In the popular imagination, when we think of Hollywood, we think of 20th Century Fox, Universal, MGM and so on. We think of those as being the studios that control the movie-making. But in this modern world, each of those studios has a corporate owner that is a multi-billion dollar corporation with a vast array of interests.

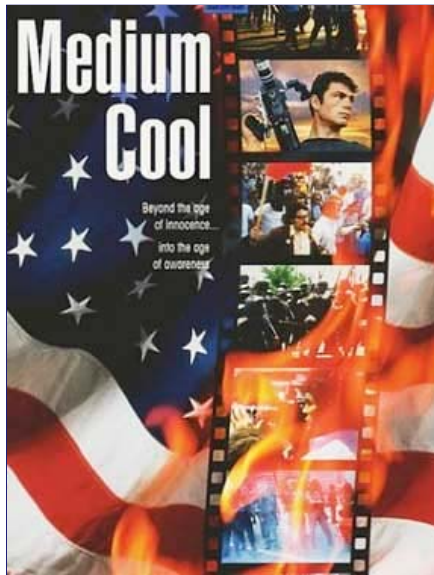
So, what Robbie Graham and I asked ourselves: If the parent companies such as Viacom, Disney and so on have other business interests – maybe even selling military arms, for instance – or if the corporations have close relationships with the government of the day, might self-interest skew the content of any given film in a studio owned by the parent company? In other words, content with an ideological take could be provided by the corporate owners.

Parent Corporations of Hollywood Studios

It's our theory so far because it's even harder to get information in documents and memos from a corporation than it is from the CIA, which is at least nominally accountable. Corporations are not accountable to anyone except their shareholders. So, I think we are trying to highlight where there have been Hollywood films that have had a great difficulty being released.

For instance, the film *Medium Cool*, which was directed by Haskell Wexler in 1969. Wexler had considerable trouble releasing the movie, which was about anti-war protests at the Democratic convention in 1968. Wexler learned a few years later after FOIA was available that on the eve of *Medium Cool's* release, the Mayor of Chicago and other

Democratic players contacted Gulf and Western - then the parent company of Paramount Studios - that if *Medium Cool* was released then certain tax benefits and other perks in Gulf and Western's favor would not happen.



Medium Cool, directed by Haskell Wexler about anti-war protesters at the 1968 Democratic convention was temporarily blocked from 1969 Paramount Studio release by Paramount's parent company, Gulf and Western, pressured by Chicago political forces.

[Editor's Note: Wikipedia – “*Medium Cool* was directed by Haskell Wexler and released in 1969, one year after the 1968 riots at the Democrat convention in Chicago. In 2003, the film was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being ‘culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant.’ 1968 was a tumultuous year in America and the Hollywood film reflects the conflicted nature of the country at the time.

“The Tet Offensive was launched; Robert Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles in June and Martin Luther King was murdered in Memphis in April; race riots occurred in major cities all over the country. Wexler's film was controversial with distributors and received an X-rating, which delayed its release. Wexler said, ‘They also objected to the language and the nudity, things which ultimately meant the film received an X-rating. What no one had the nerve to say was that it was a political ‘X.’ Obviously, the film struck a nerve as it was truly a product of the times in which it was made - there is no separating the political climate of the United States and the material in the film.’”]

Lo and behold, surprise, surprise, *Medium Cool* was badly advertised by Paramount. Wexler was not allowed to take it to film festivals. He was ordered to get authorization releases from all of the protesters in the park, which was almost impossible to do!

Medium Cool is a case from the 1960s, but in the more modern time there is another example in *Fahrenheit 9/11*, which was made by Miramax, a subsidiary of the Disney Corporation.



Fahrenheit 9/11 political documentary written and directed

by American filmmaker Michael Moore and released in 2004 by Miramax, a subsidiary of Disney. Disney management tried to block the release of the non-fiction film.

[Editor's Note: *Wikipedia - Fahrenheit 9/11* is an award-winning 2004 documentary film by American filmmaker Michael Moore. The film takes a critical look at the presidency of George W. Bush, the War on Terrorism, and its coverage in the American news media. The film holds the record for highest box office receipts by a political film in general movie release. In the film, Moore contends that American corporate media were 'cheerleaders' for the 2003 invasion of Iraq and did not provide an accurate and objective analysis of the rationale for the war or the resulting casualties there. The film's attack on the Bush administration generated much controversy around the time of the film's release, including disputes over its accuracy. In response, Moore published an extensive list of facts and sources for the film on his website. The film debuted at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival in the documentary film category and was awarded the Palme d'Or (Golden Palm), the festival's highest award.]

Disney weighed in right before it was released and said, 'Look, Miramax, you're not allowed to release this. We don't like it.' Miramax turned around and said, 'Yes, we can release it. There is no reason why we should not release it.' But Disney prevented for awhile the release from happening, even though eventually *Fahrenheit 9/11* was finally distributed to great public interest.

So, our third part of articles is looking at the upper echelon controllers of the Hollywood system, which are not normally under a great deal of scrutiny.

Why Won't *The Guardian* Publish All Three Parts?

IF *THE GUARDIAN* PUBLISHED YOUR PART 1 AS 'AN OFFER THEY COULD NOT REFUSE' ON NOVEMBER 14, WHY WOULDN'T THE GUARDIAN KEEP GOING WITH PARTS 2 AND 3?

(laughs) Well, I don't know. That's a very interesting question. To date, *The Guardian* has not seen Part 3 yet. It's a slightly more theoretical piece. Do people in the public even know a company like Viacom run by Sumner Redstone. Those aren't exactly household names and makes for a harder story to sell.

We did try to place Part 2 with *The Guardian* that is about the UFOs and misinformation through Hollywood cinema in which Robbie and I took no sides on the extraterrestrial hypothesis. But *The Guardian* would not accept it and the editors thought it was way too speculative. I don't think that is the case. We were very objective in our writing.

YOUR OWN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE RELEASED MORE UFO FILES IN 2008. SO WHY WOULD *THE GUARDIAN* TURN ITS NOSE UP AT PART 2, 'THE LIES ARE OUT THERE'?

I think it's a bad thing that Ufology is dismissed in quite a knee jerk reaction in the mainstream media. I think that's regrettable and an interesting area to explore. There are whole pieces of evidence in the subject that most people are not aware of, but I think the people we were speaking to at *The Guardian* were not in very powerful positions and rejected it mainly because of their own attitudes toward Ufology.

WHY DO YOU THINK IN GENERAL THAT YOU HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO GET THE THREE PARTS PUBLISHED TOGETHER IN THE U. K.?

I just think there is a dominant ideology, a political correctness, that dismisses UFOs with a chuckle. You know how anchormen in TV news are actually told to treat UFO stories with a tongue-in-cheek, light-hearted attitude. In that sense, there is a top down thing going on – there are directives from on high to discredit the subject. But I think that is partly due to the market in which some people have an aversion to ideas that are new. So, it's a business policy to cater to that politically safe market. Again, that is highly regrettable. All subjects should be allowed to be explored.

AND EXPLORED HONESTLY. HOW CAN THERE BE ANY HONEST JOURNALISM WHEN THE ABILITY TO INVESTIGATE THE UFO PHENOMENON IS KEPT FROM THE PUBLIC AND THE MEDIA BY GOVERNMENT POLICIES OF DENIAL IN THE INTEREST OF NATIONAL SECURITY?

That's absolutely accurate and a pertinent question, as far as I'm concerned. There are

CIA and other agencies in the United States that try to have an influence on Hollywood products. Perhaps the biggest story is about how CIA agents have infiltrated news media. We didn't go down that road too much because it's been covered by Carl Bernstein (*Washington Post* Watergate reporter) and the Senator Frank Church hearings. [Sen. Church gained national prominence during his service in the Senate through his chairmanship of the Church Committees, which conducted extensive hearings investigating extra-legal FBI and CIA intelligence-gathering and covert operations in the 1970s.] Bernstein and others have gone into a lot of detail and found an enormous extent of CIA influence – people actually placed on major newspapers and in management of mainstream news media.

In terms of Hollywood, there certainly is a significant impact from the CIA on many films. But I also think the Department of Defense has been able to make the biggest script changes. They are the ones who have been able to impact the largest number of films for decades, back through the 1940s.

Other agencies such as NASA and the FBI also have had long-term relationships with both television and Hollywood movies. Even Homeland Security had a representative who tried to represent its operations in a good light since its formation after 9/11. There's a story about Republican congresswoman, Marilyn Musgrave, who actually campaigned to get a Homeland Security entertainment liaison removed because the congresswoman wanted to get rid of undue influence on movie scripts. Thousands of dollars were spent to hire someone to secretly make Homeland Security look good in the cinema. Congresswoman Musgrave saw the entertainment liaison as a bad use of funds when a lot of bullet proof vests could be purchased for the money spent on the liaison.

If you've got government agencies working in Hollywood covertly to improve their own images, that's not only a bad use of funds, it's also fundamentally anti-Democratic and wrong.

Propaganda Versus Honesty

AND BOILS DOWN TO PROPAGANDA.

Yes, it is propaganda in its most direct form. If something is done secretly and deliberately for a political end – particularly if designed to promote an institution – that is propaganda! But I wouldn't like to say that the forces of dishonesty are winning against the forces of honesty.

DO YOU THINK IT IS FAIR TO SAY TODAY AT THE END OF 2008 THAT BOTH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND AMERICAN GOVERNMENT ARE NOW SHOWING THAT PROPAGANDA DOMINATES POLICY MORE THAN TRYING TO REPORT FACTUALLY TO THE PUBLIC?

I think powerful systems are always going to try to burnish their own image in whatever way they can. The truth really is irrelevant as far as government authorities are concerned because they want to maintain an image of success for their institutions and policies.

In any nation there has to be power exercised by a relatively small number of people. That's the contract we have with our governments. We lend authority to governments hoping the small number of leaders will use that authority wisely for the people. But it's quite another thing if the public allows that authority to get too strong and self-serving about burnishing its own image and using propaganda for the sake of its own power. That I think is really the crux of your question. There is a great difference between an authority that is legitimate versus power with power games, which are often not legitimate and should be challenged.

Having a more open government that does release files and does not use Hollywood movies to spread misinformation would be a much healthier and genuine democracy. But it seems to me that America is not a genuine democracy, not a full one anyway. It's really a plutocracy run by corporations and a very powerful government with a lot of tax payer money at its disposal and misuses that power very often quite seriously. But there is still room for optimism because Americans and the British do reject extremism."

[Editor's Note: *Wikipedia* - Plutocracy is rule by the wealthy, or power provided by wealth. In a plutocracy, the degree of economic inequality is high while the level of social mobility is low. A Plutocracy is a government controlled by a minuscule proportion of extremely wealthy individuals found in most societies. If there are no forms of control within the society, the plutocracy can easily collapse into a kleptocracy, 'reign of thieves.' Then the powerholders attempt to confiscate as much public funds as possible as their

private property. A kleptocratic state is usually thoroughly corrupt, has very little production and its economy is unstable.”]

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More Information:

For further reports about policies of denial in the interest of national security concerning unidentified flying objects and non-humans, please see my books, *An Alien Harvest* and the 2-volume *Glimpses of Other Realities* and my documentaries *A Strange Harvest* and *Strange Harvests 1993* now available in DVD format in the **Earthfiles Shop**. Also, see the **Earthfiles Archive** - only a sample of ten years of Earthfiles are listed below.

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- 12/04/2008 — Part 12: Army/CIA Unit Studied the Real UFO Blue Book Cases
- 12/02/2008 — Updated: Strange Aerial Object Over Irving, Texas
- 11/30/2008 — Part 11: Army/CIA Unit Studied the Real UFO Blue Book Cases
- 11/27/2008 — Part 10: Army/CIA Unit Studied the Real UFO Blue Book Cases
- 11/21/2008 — Colorado State Patrol Officer Encountered UFO and “Human” Stranger
- 11/19/2008 — Part 9: Army/CIA Unit Studied the Real UFO Blue Book Cases
- 11/17/2008 — Part 3: Morphing UFO Over Levittown, PA - Scientific Research
- 11/17/2008 — Part 4: Morphing UFO Over Levittown, PA - Scientific Research
- 11/16/2008 — Part 8: Army/CIA Unit Studied the Real UFO Blue Book Cases
- 11/14/2008 — Part 2: Morphing UFO Over Levittown, PA - Scientific Research
- 11/13/2008 — Part 1: Morphing UFO Over Levittown, PA Drops Little Squares of Light
- 11/07/2008 — U. S. Border Patrol Agent Reports Camouflaged Underground Bases in New Mexico and Beam “Swallowed Up” California Airplane
- 11/05/2008 — Part 7: Army/CIA Unit Studied the Real UFO Blue Book Cases
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- 10/03/2008 — Part 6: Army/CIA Unit Studied the Real UFO Blue Book Cases
- 09/29/2008 — Half Cat and Other Animal Mutilations Around the World and East of Palm Springs, California
- 09/24/2008 — Part 5: Army/CIA Unit Studied the Real UFO Blue Book Cases
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- 08/06/2008 — Part 4: Original Carbon of Scorched Memo Links Government UFO Cover-Up and JFK Assassination
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- 08/01/2008 — Part 1: Rise of Fourth Reich in America?
- 07/26/2008 — Part 1: Why No Military Response to Radar Unknown Headed to Bush Crawford Ranch on January 8, 2008?
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- 06/12/2008 — Barbury Castle Pi Formation: “Perfectly Clean” in Muddy, Rain-Soaked Field
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- 04/06/2008 — Final Part 10: Real X-File, Source Unknown
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- 02/08/2008 — Law Officers Describe Unidentified Shape-Shifting Aerial Craft in Stephenville, Texas, Region
- 01/28/2008 — Updated 01-28-08: Viewer Letters About Aerial Craft and Military Flyovers Above Dublin, Stephenville and Selden, Texas
- 01/24/2008 — Part 17, Final: In League With A UFO, Interview with Lou Baldin
- 01/18/2008 — Updated: Huge Aerial Craft Over Dublin, Texas, “Longer Than 3 Football Fields”

Websites:

Central Intelligence Agency: <https://www.cia.gov/>

Majestic-12 Documents: <http://www.majesticdocuments.com>

Coalition for Freedom of Information: <http://www.freedomofinfo.org/>

Grant Cameron, Canada UFO Researcher: <http://www.presidentialufo.com>

Credits

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