

The 'Top-Secret UFO Papers' NSA Won't Release

The National Security Agency has reasons unrelated to UFOs to withhold these 156 classified papers. A former NSA employee who has seen them says they contain no worthwhile information on UFOs.

Philip J. Klass

IF YOU CHANCE to catch Stanton T. Friedman, UFOlogy's most colorful spokesman, in one of his frequent television, radio, or lecture appearances, you will hear him accuse the U.S. government of a UFO coverup that he calls a "Cosmic Watergate." Friedman, a nuclear physicist turned UFO lecturer, is a P. T. Barnum-type showman who typically charges that the National Security Agency (NSA) is withholding "160 top-secret UFO documents."

As proof, Friedman holds up several pages of a heavily censored, once top-secret petition submitted by NSA to the U.S. District Court in Washington explaining why release of the documents would likely "damage . . . our national security." NSA's position was endorsed by a U.S. District Court, a subsequent three-judge Federal Court of Appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court. Thus NSA is withholding 156 UFO-related papers—almost the 160 that Friedman typically claims.

This might seem to show that Friedman is correct and there is indeed a U.S. government UFO coverup. But in reality, it is Friedman who is guilty of withholding information from the public about these NSA papers—information that would challenge his claims.

Friedman typically identifies NSA as the nation's largest and most secretive intelligence agency, which is true. But he never describes its several missions (which are known to him as a result of reading James Bamford's 1982 book about NSA, *The Puzzle Palace*) that could explain NSA's actions.

Philip J. Klass is a veteran aerospace editor and investigator of UFO claims. His most recent books are UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game and UFOs: The Public Deceived (Prometheus Books). He lives in Washington, D.C.

One of NSA's primary missions is to eavesdrop on radio communications of potentially hostile countries, referred to as "communications intelligence," or COMINT. A second mission is to "crack" the cryptographic codes of other countries in order to decipher their intercepted communications. NSA's third mission is to develop cryptographic techniques for U.S. government and military agencies that it hopes will be impervious to being cracked by other nations.

According to the NSA petition to the U.S. District Court, the 156 "records being withheld are COMINT reports that were produced between 1958 and 1979." This means that these are decoded transcripts of intercepted messages from foreign government sources, most likely Soviet-bloc countries. They may have been intercepted by U.S. agents in the USSR or in Soviet-bloc countries, or even from covert facilities in "neutral" countries.

If any of them contained "smoking gun"-type "UFO secrets"—for example, revelations that the USSR knew that UFOs were extraterrestrial craft—it would be foolish for the U.S. government to try to maintain a "UFO coverup," since it could be exposed at any time by Soviet leaders. The relatively small number of such records in NSA's possession, collected over a 21-year period, indicate very scant interest in UFOs by Soviet-bloc countries. The average is less than one a month.

Friedman never acknowledges that NSA might have good reason, other than a UFO coverup, to withhold such documents. He must surely recognize that they could reveal sources and facilities unknown to the Soviet bloc and, more important, *which cryptographic codes have been cracked by NSA and are no longer secure*. While the USSR itself may no longer be using some of the older codes, when they are replaced with new ones they are typically given to and used by other countries in the Soviet bloc.

Fortuitously, Tom Deuley, a man with a strong interest in UFOs, went to work for NSA in mid-1978 and was employed there for four years. He was at NSA during the period when Citizens Against UFO Secrecy (CAUS) was trying to force the agency to release the documents. Deuley is now active in the UFO movement, serving as an official in two UFO organizations: the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) and the Fund for UFO Research (FUFOR).

In late June 1987, Deuley presented a paper at a MUFON conference in Washington entitled "Four Years at NSA—No UFOs." In his paper Deuley said he had transferred to NSA headquarters just prior to attending the 1978 MUFON conference in Dayton, Ohio. "Before making the trip," Deuley said, "I felt it was necessary to let NSA know I had an interest in UFOs. . . . Within a week I had an appointment with some administrative officials to discuss my trip to Dayton and my interest in UFOs." Based on that meeting, Deuley said he did not "get any feeling that they [NSA] even cared about UFOs."

As a result of the meeting, Deuley said, he "met several other persons at NSA, and from other agencies, who had maintained their own interest in UFOs over the years," and these NSA associates sent him newspaper



Stanton T. Friedman, in one of his frequent TV appearances, displays what he claims to be proof of the government's cover-up of significant UFO data—a heavily censored “Top Secret” court petition from the National Security Agency. Friedman withholds the full facts about NSA’s UFO documents.

clippings and cartoons about UFO incidents.

Because of Deuley’s interest in UFOs, he was one of those selected by NSA to review its UFO-related material. Said Deuley: “I believe I saw or held copies of the large majority of the documents [that were] withheld in that FOIA suit. Though there may have been exceptions among the documents I *did not* see, none of the documents I was aware of had any information of scientific value.”

The former NSA employee told the MUFON conference audience: “I did not see any indication of official NSA interest in the subject [UFOs]. . . . I did not see any exchange of material indicating any form of follow-up activities. . . . I did not see any indication of real involvement other than the existence of the documents themselves.”

Deuley endorsed NSA’s withholding the material, noting the need to protect intelligence sources and methods. “It is clear to me that the possibility of damage to national security sources and methods far outweigh the value of the information under question.”

Deuley concluded that if NSA was “involved with UFOs in any active way, I would have at least caught a hint of it in their treatment toward me or that with my openness about the subject, some informal contact would have mentioned it. Because neither of these occurred, *I concluded that UFOs do not have any importance at NSA.*” (Emphasis added.)

Because I was attending another concurrent session at the MUFON conference and did not hear Deuley’s paper, I wrote him to obtain a copy.

When he sent it, he wrote that his paper was aimed at “detering UFO investigators from wasting their time trying to get at the papers that NSA was allowed to withhold.” He added: “The documents . . . are not worth the effort, in terms of forwarding the effort of UFO research.”

On July 25, 1987, I sent a copy of Deuley’s paper to Stanton Friedman, wondering if he would accept the views of a first-hand observer who was a fellow “UFO-believer.” Several months later, Friedman and I appeared on a television show in Portland, Oregon, and he again whipped out the heavily censored NSA court petition for the television audience as proof of a “government coverup.” Friedman made no mention of the content of Deuley’s MUFON paper.

More recently, on December 9, 1988, when Friedman and I participated in a talk-show on Seattle radio station KING, he was asked to document his charge of a government UFO coverup. Friedman responded: “The National Security Agency admits it has 160 UFO documents. They’re highly classified. It not only refuses to release them . . .” Again, no mention of Deuley’s statements.

The foregoing may provide a useful perspective when one chances to see or hear Friedman make his Cosmic Watergate charge and cite the NSA papers to support his claim. ●

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