

scientific research

An examination of aspects of Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena (UAP) from a scientific perspective.

Wednesday, December 21, 2016

Jacques Vallee and the 'Secret Onion'

Introduction

John B. Alexander's 2011 book, *'UFOs: Myths; Conspiracies and Realities'* took us inside the 'Advanced Theoretical Physics Project,' (ATP) a group of US government employees, and others working in private enterprise, who took a detailed look into UAP, in the 1980's.

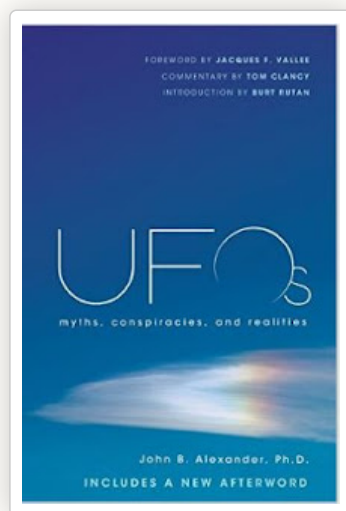


Image courtesy of Amazon Books

Jacques Vallee's latest book, *'Forbidden Science: Volume Three'* has a number of very interesting observations about the ATP, and even after thirty years, his perceptive comments are of real value. I therefore, thought that I would cite these references to the ATP, for your perusal, given that few people obtain a copy of this series of the Vallee diaries. In addition, I will add some comments from Alexander's book.

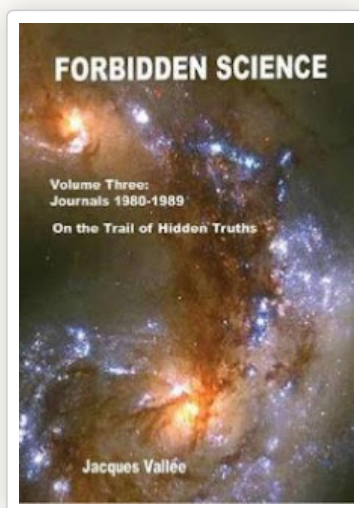


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The ATP according to Alexander

' We also anticipated that if an exploration of the topic were conducted responsibly, one of two things would happen. The best scenario would be that we would be brought into the existing program, thus

Contributors

 Keith Basterfield

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AASAP

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FLERE OPLYSNINGER OK

'The first set of meetings and briefings were conducted from 1984 through 1988.' (Alexander , p.21.)

Vallee 24 July 1985 p.199

'There was a meeting on frontier subjects in Washington recently. When Hal arrived he discovered the topic was UFOs, and the overall project was structured in multiple layers; like an onion. The meeting was classified above top secret, under a codeword. Fifteen attendees reviewed cases like Kirtland AFB, Cash-Landrum and Tehran. They included **Howell McConnell** and John Tyler. Kit had been invited but couldn't attend.

Two aspects of the meeting were ironic, Hal said. First, attendees were there because they ran programs that were impacted by unidentified signals but they were not necessarily interested in the UFO phenomenon itself.

Second irony; they came to the conclusion there must be as secret UFO project, *somewhere else!* Does the government have in its custody some saucer fragments? Perhaps it does not know what to do with them, someone suggested. Perhaps American industry should be given access to the supposed hoard of alien treasures? Perhaps it already has? In the absence of any hard fact this remains wild speculation, even at such high levels of the government.'

27 July 1985 p.200

'Hal...left with a proposal from me that he will take to the Washington group (which I now nickname the "Secret Onion.") on August sixth.'

30 July 1985 p.200

'Bill Calvert, one of my most trusted sources, called me on Friday with some urgency. "I've heard about a new group in Washington." he began, "a high-level project headed up by John Alexander, an Army expert. They study UFOs. Fifteen participants are positive, five are negative about UFO reality. One of them is John Gardner, who controls billions of dollars, probably for Star Wars. Creation of the group seems to have been precipitated by rumours started by the Soviets. They hinted to their friends in Washington that they had pieces of a saucer and didn't know what to do with them."

"How did you learn all this?" I asked, astonished that the supposedly classified group ("above top secret" Hal had told me, swearing me to silence) was already compromised. "I heard it from **Jack Houck**, an engineer at McDonald in Huntington Beach. He is a student of a woman friend of mine, a medium in L.A. He keeps bringing her some CIA types who give her coordinates and asks what she sees...So I called Hal, suggesting lunch, and I confronted him with the leak of his "supersecret" information. Hal was shocked when he heard it: "After all the care we took to define the secret according to different layers of the Onion," he said, "we've already failed! The idea was to dangle our collective skills before whoever is running the Big Project. Now that will never happen, we blew it. again!"

26 August 1985 p.203

'Hal send me a note from Texas, where his own institute is now established. He tells me that my proposal is included in what we still jokingly call the *Secret Onion*, because of the layers of increasing secrecy around the core people. Leaks have been stopped. John Alexander's horse had already fled the barn, however.'

23 November 1985 p.218

'News about Jack Houck: he will not be involved in UFO research with the government group after all...Hal tells me this results from official reactions when it became obvious that news of the Secret Onion's existence had somehow leaked to his New Age friends. The group has now given a briefing on UFOs to the Under Secretary for Defense. They requested copies of my biography and my proposal.

"If they give us a green light, I'll have to get organized," I told Hal. "You won't be the only one," he replied. "If they give us a green light, about 20 people will have to get organized."

1 January 1986 p.222

'Hal told me the Secret Onion project was delayed again.'

8 March 1986 p.226

'I have developed a screening process for reports, based on my expert system, and wrote an article about it (22). Hal promises funding from the Secret Onion, but I am not holding my breathe.'

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'Over dinner with Hal on Friday, I learned that the Secret Onion wasn't quite dead: a briefing was recently given to McMann, number two man at the CIA, who seemed to favour releasing some funds. He was asked two questions: (1) would a study of UFOs be useful to the agency? (2) Are other groups already doing it? McMann answered yes to the first question and no to the second.

16 April 1986. p.234

'I expect nothing from my visit to the Elysee, as I expect nothing from Hal's project with John Alexander and the Secret Onion.'

11 May 1986. p.242

'To Kit I intend to present strong comments about the Secret Onion project: I have no intention of becoming part of the outer skin of some shadowy organization whose chiefs I don't trust and who seem to know less than I do about the problem.' (2)

(2) p.480.

'In February 2011 Colonel Alexander published a book (*UFOs: Myths, Conspiracies and Realities*. NY. Macmillan) describing his efforts to obtain funding for the top-secret project. It has become known that the key meetings took place under DoE supervision on May 20-25, 1985 in the secure facility of the **BDM Corporation** in McLean, Virginia. The group called itself the "Advanced Theoretical Physics Conference" or ATP.'

Alleged participants were Samuel Finch, Oke Shannon and John Kink of Los Alamos National Laboratory; Bill Wilkinson from CIA; Howell McConnell from NSA (whom I met in October 1972); Hal Puthoff and Jack Houck; Ed Speakman of INSCOM (Army Intelligence); Bill Souder and **Bob Wood** of McDonnell Douglas; Jack Stuart of the Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Engineering; Bert Stubblebine of BDM; **Ron Blackburn**, Milt Janzen and Don Keuble of Lockheed; Ralph Freeman, Gary Bright, **radiologist Paul Tyler**, **Ed Dames** and **Lt. Col. Mike Neery**. **Ron Pandolfi** of CIA also claims to have been involved.'

18 May 1986. p.243

'Kit and I only had two hours together at Detroit airport. He shares my concerns about the Secret Onion; some of the participants seem increasingly willing to believe any wild rumour they pick up from ufologists, without checking their reliability. He refused to take part in the meetings as long as no budget had been allocated to give it an official status. He recommended that I stay on the sidelines.

"There are two communities involved," he said, "On one hand are the scientists, together with the paranormal researchers like you and me, Hal and **Dick Haines**, **Sturrock**, **Niemtzow**, **Schuessler**; we represent a small community, 20 at most; on the other side are analysts, who come from Intelligence. So the idea would be to take some members from both groups, as in the Manhattan project, the intersection of these two sets. The challenge is to pick people carefully, so they can attack the problem in some concrete fashion."

"So what's the hang-up" I asked.

"Simple. The folks from the government side come from Star Wars; they are used to enormous budgets, so they have escalated their ambitions. What they have in mind is none other than your **Alintel**. By the way, in the process, they've become convinced that there was no other project."

"So what's the structure?" I asked.

"At the core is a group of bureaucrats from DoD running the proposed budget. The next layer would include scientists like you and Hal. You'd know everything except where the funds come from. The next layer would be composed of mission specialists with particular assignments. The outer layer of the Onion would be made up of consultants."

There were many problems with this concept when I reviewed it in my mind. For one thing, the core members include high-level analysts who have a religious agenda...Another problem I have with the Onion has to do with its supposed secrecy. These people are giving briefings left and right throughout Washington, looking for money. So, isn't the confidential nature of the project already compromised?"

22 June 1986 p.247

'Hal whispered to me that on July 2nd the briefing for the Secret Onion would be submitted to **Lieutenant General Abrahamson**, head of the Star Wars project.

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"What if he doesn't?"

"Then its a major setback, but we're working on other leads."

SDI according to Alexander

'After setting the stage with the services, it was time to transition the project into a formal program with a real budget. The logical place to go was Strategic Defense Initiative, known to most people simply as SDI or by the colloquial name - Star Wars...Headed by Lieutenant General Jim Abrahamson, SDI had a budget of about five billion dollars...We figured that SDI certainly had both the money and the mission that could support a small program to study UFOs...Our concern was that an uncorrelated target - meaning a UFO - might trigger a response based on erroneous data...As we moved ahead with the meeting and presented more data, the tone changed considerably. General Abrahamson noted that as a former fighter pilot the concepts intrigued him...However, when it came to money, he turned us down.' (Alexander, p.33-34.)

17 August 1986 p.257

'I had a long conversation with Hal: Abrahamson heard the Secret Onion briefing, reacted in an encouraging way, and appointed a scientific committee to make a recommendation, in true bureaucratic fashion. It is headed up by a man Hal describes as a friend, who financed part of the SRI work over the years. (8).

(8) Vallee, p.481. 'Jack Vorona, a top manager for the Defence Intelligence Agency.'

More SDI according to Alexander

'General Abrahamson was not totally dismissive. He told us that his program would soon be monitoring more of space than had ever been done before. If we could tell him what to look for, he would consider including that data in the algorithms that were being generated for the SDI system. For reasons not related to SDI, we did not have the opportunity to follow up on his offer.' (Alexander, p.35.)

20 September 1986 p.262/263

'Hal Puthoff tells me that the big Secret Onion briefing of September 5th has been sidetracked: a highly placed official decided the Abrahamson committee was the wrong venue. Unfortunately he never said what the "right" venue would be.'

28 November 1986 p.268

'Hal tells me that the Secret Onion project is dead. After all those high level meetings, someone who was even higher threw a monkey wrench into the gears. I believe they became visible prematurely. The ludicrous episode with Jack Houck has demonstrated that they were incapable of maintaining confidentiality."

7 March 1987 p.276

'Separately, Kit and Hal have assured me that plans for the Secret Onion were being revived in Washington. A budget 'niche' has been found, but someone has requested that the group brief the Air Force on their plans. The Space Command gave an enthusiastic green light. Already, arrangements are made for investigators to dig into some cases, but the first targets would be dead horses like the Bentwaters incident, *Ummo*, or the *Prieure de Sion*, all that conspiratorial stuff that obscures the genuine mystery. I have no doubt they can easily spend millions of dollars on such wild goose chases and come up with nothing. All this reinforces my suspicion that nobody in or out of government has taken the measure of the real problem.'

30 July 1987 p.288

'Hal, who has news about the Secret Onion project, tells me the latest briefing went to the top of the SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative) staff, who asked for the Air Force's advice. Briefings were set up for the Space Command.

"There's only one more step, Jacques for a really massive project to begin, " Hal said. "All the cut-outs are set up, covers for the funds. We've started a physicist on a study of advanced propulsion."

"Does he know anything about UFOs?" I asked.

Valerie Ransone

Valerie Ransone

Vallee

Westall

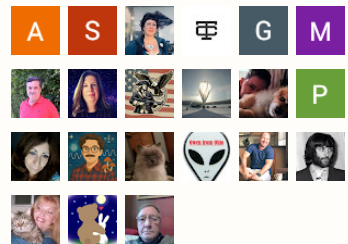
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project, I still call simply "the Secret Onion." He has been told everything was fine; he should go brief the Air Force, and maybe the Secretary. Finally everybody signed off. The next step is to set up contractual channels. One defense contractor backed out but two others were eager to step in.

"Well its a turning point indeed, " I said. "Now it is up to us to do something smart."

"I went back and pushed on that point, " said Hal, "you're in the right spot; we need you before things get off to a big start. We should avoid past mistakes. We need your international research contacts, and a good expert system."

Something may happen after all, but I still wonder why it should be kept secret, when so much more could be achieved in the open.'

3 October 1987 p.297

'Hal has received my letter containing some thoughts about the Secret Onion. He will send it on to his liaison officer.'

17 January 1988 p.309

'On Thursday I had lunch with John Alexander...He is one of the military leaders behind the Secret Onion project, which is still stumbling along.'

6 March 1988 p.313

'We (Hal) also caught up with some news of the Secret Onion. As I had surmised, John Alexander is expected to serve as the operational head and the Army will be in charge, having finally obtained the agreement of its Science Board. Dick Haines was brought in for a briefing about pilot sightings but wasn't told about the full scale of the project.'

The Army Science Board according to Alexander

'...a meeting was established for a small group of members of the Army Science Board...This was probably the longest briefing conducted on UFOs in the entire ATP experience and it lasted most of a working day...Among the experts present was Richard Haines who was then working at NASA-Ames in California...Dick gave an excellent briefing on the results of his extensive research into reports provided by predominantly civilian pilots...At the end of the meeting, the members of the Army Science Board present discussed what they had heard...The members present unanimously concluded that there was sufficient evidence of high-quality observations and data from veridical sources to proceed...There was one area on which they were split - that was whether or not the Army should be leading the project...the project leadership issue turned out to be moot...' (Alexander was reassigned, and ended up at Los Alamos.) "For the record I was able to hold a meeting similar to ATP at the lab."(Alexander, pp36-38.)

13 March 1988 p.315

'On Friday I had lunch with Dick Haines. He told me about the invitation he'd received to brief staffers of an Army Undersecretary, describing his research on pilot sightings. Hal and John Alexander had suggested this briefing to try and get a final decision. Thus, contrary to what people have been told, the Secret Onion project has not been established yet.'

29 May 1988 p.323/324

(Hal) ' This led us to discuss the Secret Onion project, ill conceived from the beginning.

"It's unrealistic to believe that the government will finance a large project that can only bring controversy at a time when Reagan is accused of consulting with astrologers," I told him, "while his Star Wars project is being scaled down."

I continue to think the best way to make progress, in a hard science sense, would be a succession of small, discreet, but open, independent projects, yet everybody seems to be on a big public crusade. Even with all the precautions they claim to be taking, I don't believe John Alexander's project could be kept quiet for more than few months.'

28 June 1988 p.326/327

'I spoke privately with Hal, who confirmed the Secret Onion was dead. This didn't happen because higher-ups were not interested but, on the contrary, because there were so many new bits of data, and such concern for military security, that the Pentagon kept the lid on everything.'

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the effort was disbanded. In my opinion, it was doomed from the beginning: too obvious, and starting from false premises.'

26 June 1988 p.402

(Talking to Hal.) 'I also mentioned John Alexander and the Secret Onion project. "In my conversation with Alexander," I pointed out to Hal, "he didn't ask anything about any of my data. We spoke about parapsychology, the recent study by the National Academy of Sciences, dolphins..."

"They started with an ETH model," Hal said, "Alexander lined up several labs for material and photographic analysis. He had experts rewrite NORAD software to inventory all objects flying on trajectories that didn't match ICBMs. But they didn't have a theoretical framework."

"That may have been part of the problem," I said. "How did the whole thing collapse?"

"He was only serving as the action officer for heavy-weight people, high-ups in aircraft companies, industry, government, and the national labs. A lot of people had been briefed and had agreed to cooperate. But all of a sudden he was re-assigned as part of a move that affected 40,000 people in the Armed Forces. He was sent away to Los Alamos. He lost his power base."

That left me unconvinced. "My experience is that if someone really high up wants something done, it gets done. Surely they could have prevented one person out of 40,000 from being re-assigned."

"The plan may have been killed by someone deciding that the timing was wrong, or they were the wrong people., or the approach was bad," Hal conceded vaguely.

"How do you know that nothing got done?"

"Only one project got started, because it could spend year-end money, a small investigation into some electromagnetic and gravity effects. Another project, which had to do with potential detectors never got off the ground. The group that backed the whole idea is still there. I would know if anything concrete had developed.'

18 October 1989 p.446

'Yesterday afternoon Colonel John Alexander from Los Alamos came over to my office in Menlo Park to discuss his UFO research plans following the failure of the Secret Onion project...'

Closing comments

It is always good, to be able to have a second individual, provide comments, from the time period.

By **Keith Basterfield** at [December 21, 2016](#)



Labels: [Vallee](#)

2 comments:



NGagnon February 21, 2020 at 5:48 AM

I was the Security Guard signing in folks like John Alexander next to Albert Stubblebine at the BDM HQ in the mid 80s.

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Keith Basterfield February 21, 2020 at 7:17 PM

Hi NGagnon, Thank you for this information. I would be interested to communicating with you off line, if you will. My email is keithbasterfield@yahoo.com.au

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Academic funding for UAP research

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Things I learned from Jacques Vallee's "Forbidden Science 6."

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CONTEXT FROM ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

Spirited Growth/01 Books/Skinwalkers at the Pentagon.pdf

(p153-154)

(PUBLIC DOMAIN) - July 2011 — A ufological periodical claims in 1998, researchers at a facility in Africa managed by AFRICOM security made contact with an entity from a parallel-universe and received messages and predictions from it for five years. Among the claims were that dolphins were the most

“clever” intelligences on Earth. Col. John Alexander claims he was involved in telepathic experiments and wild dolphins in the Bahamas; something he also told Jacques Vallee in 1988.

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