

Publication: Jnl Final Edition 8/2005-today; Date: Aug 25, 2008; Section: Front Page; Page: A1



Book Links UFOs to Nukes

Author says aliens are trying to warn us of weapons' dangers

Copyright © 2008 Albuquerque Journal By John Fleck Journal Staff Writer

Robert Hastings is nothing if not persistent in his pursuit of a connection between UFOs and the world's nuclear weapons programs.

For more than three decades, the Albuquerque resident has collected evidence and spoken around the country. He self-published a book of his findings this year, "UFO and Nukes." Last month he appeared on CNN's "Larry King Live."

The core of his argument is that visitors from space are monitoring our nuclear weapons operations, likely trying to warn us about their dangers, and that the government is covering it up.

"I believe the American public has a right to know the facts," Hastings said in an interview.

The problem, according to independent experts, is that Hastings is wrong.

"It's preposterous," said Kingston George, a retired physicist and engineer who worked on weapons systems in the 1960s and is an eyewitness to one of Hastings' favorite cases.

The events Hastings describes have "plausible, prosaic explanations," said noted space historian James Oberg.

Oberg, who has studied much of the same space and nuclear history as Hastings, says the umbrella of secrecy surrounding common nuclear weapons system malfunctions in the past creates much of the uncertainty that leads to UFO claims today.

People responsible for secrecy surrounding nuclear weapon system malfunctions were happy to have them misinterpreted as UFO incidents because it made keeping the real secret easier, Oberg said.

The Big Sur Incident

Hastings says his UFO curiosity began as a teenager, when his father worked at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana. Hastings worked three nights a week in a radar tower, and one night he watched as a radar operator tracked five unknown objects.

"That sparked my interest," he said.

To Hastings, an event off the coast of California in September 1964 is one of the most important events of the nuclear age.

He believes an alien spaceship destroyed a dummy nuclear warhead during a U.S. missile test. The story has dark undertones of Central Intelligence Agency operatives and disappearing film.

It is, Hastings wrote last year in an article in the International UFO Reporter, "an unparalleled example of UFO interest in — and interference with — our nuclear missile systems."

George, now retired and living in Santa Maria, Calif., has heard this before.

In 1964, he headed up the team responsible for filming the missile test.

Fifteen years ago, George first tried to explain what he says really happened — a missile malfunction, misunderstood and amplified in the retelling until it has taken a place in UFO lore.

Unbowed, Hastings was on “Larry King Live” last month, talking about how the missile test fits what, in an interview, he called “a systematic pattern of activity at nuclear sites.”

The Big Sur Incident, Hastings’ telegenic case, happened when an Air Force team led by George set up a telescope at Big Sur on the California coast to film missile tests from Vandenberg Air Force Base.

According to an account by Air Force photographic team member Bob Jacobs, the film showed an alien spacecraft darting around the missile as it flew, ultimately sending it tumbling into the sea short of its target.

In 1993, George wrote an article for *Skeptical Inquirer*, which describes itself as “the magazine for science and reason,” offering a more prosaic explanation.

George was in charge of the photographic team and held a higher security clearance than Jacobs. According to George’s account, the film actually showed a malfunction that would have left the missile vulnerable to Soviet countermeasures. When the problem was discovered, the film and information about the event was immediately classified “top secret,” according to George.

That explains the extreme secrecy imposed on the film, according to George. Without the proper security clearance, according to George, Jacobs would never have been given the real reason.

A tough sell

Hastings’ largest area of research involves UFO incidents at U.S. nuclear missile bases. He claims repeated incidents in which UFOs were reported at bases at the same time missile systems malfunctioned.

Oberg, an expert on the history of U.S. and Soviet missile technology, calls Hastings’ missile malfunction cases “intriguing,” but not for the same reason as Hastings.

A more likely explanation for the malfunctions, Oberg said, is the “persnickety” launch control systems of the day.

At the time, unusual sights in the sky were not uncommon, and in the distance of history, the two linked, Oberg argues.

“They connect the two in the time-honored logic that people have,” Oberg said.

Hastings acknowledges he has no documentary evidence linking the alleged UFOs and the missile malfunctions for any of the cases described in his 602-page book.

He said he stopped filing federal Freedom of Information Act requests in 1984 after concluding that the government was withholding information about the events in which he was interested.

Instead, Hastings said, he has focused on finding former military personnel willing to describe their experiences.

He acknowledged that his thesis is sometimes a tough sell.

“People resist new ideas,” he said.



COURTESY CNN Albuquerque UFO researcher Robert Hastings appearing on CNN's "Larry King Live" in July. He claims the government is hiding video of aliens destroying a test missile in California.