

~~(S)~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

25 October 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. McLUCAS

SUBJECT: Recovery of Space Objects

At the right is a message from Col Parrish and Dr. Walt Leverton relaying Dr. Leverton's findings on return of space objects during his recent trip [redacted] It is our opinion, affirmed by General Allen, that this is indeed debris from GAMBIT Mission 4335.

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Under the United Nations conventions we as the launching state are entitled to recover reentered space debris. For that reason and because we are sure this is one of our reconnaissance satellites we wish to gain custody of the recovered materials. At the same time we would like to look further to see if there is any debris which [redacted] have not recovered. We propose the following plan of action.

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We will contact an appropriate [redacted] one who has a TALENT KEYHOLE clearance. We can determine who to see through our CIA contacts. We will approach [redacted] explain to him our objective and ask his support. We will probably arrange for [redacted] presently assigned to the Aerospace Corporation [redacted] We would ask him to head an effort to recover additional debris not already identified.

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We would like to handle this whole affair at a very low level and do not propose to involve the ICPC at this stage of the game. Unless there are objections we will proceed with this approach.

Frederick L. Hofmann
Frederick L. Hofmann
Deputy Director for
Plans and Policy

Classified by BYEMAN-1
~~EXEMPT FROM AUTOMATIC~~
~~DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE~~
~~OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652~~
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5B(2)
DECLASSIFY ON ImpDet
~~/TALENT KEYHOLE~~

GAMBIT
HANDLE VIA
BYEMAN
CONTROL SYSTEM

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EXCLUDED FROM AUTOMATIC REGRADING
DOD DIRECTIVE 5200.10 DOES NOT APPLY

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PAGE 1 OF 1 PAGES

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PRIORITY WHIG
GAMBIT/HEXAGON
FOR GEN BRADBURN FROM COL PARRISH
REF AUTOSEVOCOM CONVERSATION OF YESTERDAY THE
FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE
WITH YOUR REQUEST OF DR LEVERTON CONCERNING THE
DETAILS OF THE RECOVERY INCIDENT [redacted]

QUOTE. DURING THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 16-19 I WAS
VISITING THE [redacted]
CONTRACTORS IN CONNECTION WITH THE AEROSPACE
CORPORATION'S ROLE IN THE [redacted] COMMUNICATIONS
SATELLITE PROGRAM. I HAVE TWO MTS PERMANENTLY
STATIONED [redacted] ON THAT

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Dr McLucas	
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PROGRAM. ONE OF THEM, IRVING RZEPNICK, TOLD ME IN
CONFIDENCE THAT HE HAD BEEN SHOWN SOME MATERIAL
WHICH [redacted] HAD FOUND IN [redacted]
EARLIER THIS YEAR (RZEPNICK FORMERLY WAS ASSIGNED
TO THE HEXAGON PROGRAM OFFICE AT AEROSPACE).
RZEPNICK ASKED ME IF I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE MATERIAL
AND I STATED THAT I WOULD. [redacted] ARRANGED
FOR US TO VISIT THE [redacted]

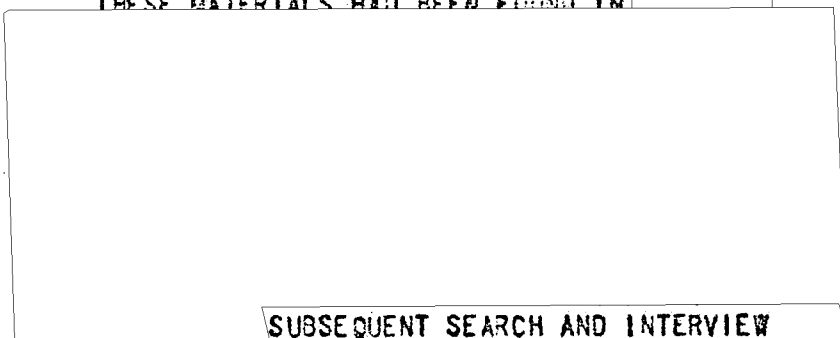
[redacted] RZEPNICK AND I WERE SHOWN THE
MATERIALS WHICH WERE QUITE OPENLY DISPLAYED IN TWO
OF THE LABORATORIES THERE. THE RECOVERED MATERIALS
CONSIST OF THREE ITEMS: (1) A SPHERICAL TITANIUM
PRESSURE VESSEL APPROXIMATELY 12.3 INCHES IN DIAMETER
AND A WALL THICKNESS APPROXIMATELY 0.2 INCHES. THIS
SPHERICAL CONTAINER WAS IN QUITE GOOD CONDITION
EXCEPT FOR ONE HOLE APPROXIMATELY FIVE INCHES IN
DIAMETER. THE SPHERE WEIGHED APPROXIMATELY 15
POUNDS. (2) A QUANTITY OF GLASS IN VARIOUS SIZE PIECES
RANGING FROM FIST TO THUMB SIZE. THESE PIECES READILY

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FITTED TOGETHER TO MAKE A PIE SHAPED SECTION FROM A
CIRCULAR PLATE. APPROXIMATELY 10 INCHES OF THE
PERIPHERY OF THE CIRCLE WAS REPRESENTED. THEY HAD
ESTABLISHED THAT THE COMPLETE CIRCLE HAD BEEN
APPROXIMATELY 38 INCHES IN DIAMETER. THERE WAS NO
EVIDENCE OF MELTING OR EROSION OF THE GLASS. THE
FIRST 1-1/2 INCHES INWARD FROM THE CIRCUMFERENCE
WAS APPROXIMATELY ONE INCH THICK. FROM THAT
POINT TOWARD THE CENTER OF THE PLATE THE THICKNESS
STEPPED UP TO 1.8 INCHES, AND THERE WAS CLEAR
EVIDENCE OF AN EGG CRATE WEBB STRUCTURE ON THE
QUOTE BACK SIDE UNQUOTE. THE PITCH OF THE WEBBS
WAS 2-1/2 INCHES AND THE THICKNESS OF THE WEBBED
MATERIAL APPROXIMATELY 3 SLANT 16 INCHES (THEY
GAVE ME TWO SMALL SAMPLES OF THE GLASS WHICH I
HAVE IN SAFEKEEPING). (2) A BADLY BURNED ASSEMBLAGE
OF WHAT APPEARED TO BE CIRCUIT BOARDS WITH A NUMBER
OF DISCRETE COMPONENTS ATTACHED. AT LEAST ONE OF
THESE WAS A RELAY IN A TRANSISTOR CAN. THEY HAD
OPENED ANOTHER TRANSISTOR CAN AND FOUND IT TO
CONTAIN AN INTEGRATED CIRCUIT ON A SILICON CHIP.

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THOSE COMPONENTS WHICH HAD LEGIBLE MARKINGS WERE
OF U.S. MANUFACTURE, AND THERE WERE SOME
CONNECTIONS MADE BY THE WIRE WRAP TECHNIQUE.
THESE MATERIALS HAD BEEN FOUND IN



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SUBSEQUENT SEARCH AND INTERVIEW
UNCOVERED THE GLASS MATERIAL APPROXIMATELY ONE
MILE SOUTH AND EAST FROM THE LOCATION OF THE
SPHERE. THE ELECTRONICS MATERIAL WAS LOCATED 8
TO 10 MILES SOUTH AND EAST FROM THE SPHERE (I HAVE
A MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THESE FINDS). ONE

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OF THE INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED HAD BEEN OFFICIATING
AT A FOOTBALL GAME ON MAY 20 AND HEARD A WHISTLING

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MAIL TO STEWART
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SOUND AND SAW SOME OBJECT APPEAR TO LAND IN AN ADJACENT GARDEN AND HAD GONE OVER TO LOOK FOR THE OBJECT AND FOUND NOTHING. IT TURNED OUT THAT THE TITANIUM SPHERE WAS FOUND IN A FIELD ADJACENT TO THE GARDEN. IT SEEMS REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT THE SPHERE INDEED IMPACTED ON MAY 20. AS YOU KNOW THAT COINCIDES WITH THE LAUNCH OF GAMBIT NO. 35 IN WHICH THE AGENA ATTITUDE SYSTEM FAILED. THE MOST PROBABLE IMPACT POINT FOR VEHICLE NO. 35 HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BY THE CONTRACTOR TO BE IN THE SOUTHERN PORTION OF [REDACTED] A PROJECTION OF ITS FLIGHT PATH WOULD HAVE TAKEN IT OVER THE APPROXIMATE AREA WHERE THESE MATERIALS WERE RECOVERED.

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HANDLE VIA DYEMAN
GENERAL STAFF

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IT SEEMS QUITE CLEAR THAT THE TITANIUM SPHERE AND THE GLASS MATERIAL ARE PORTIONS OF VEHICLE NO. 35. IT IS ALSO HIGHLY PROBABLE THAT THE ELECTRONICS MATERIAL IS OF THE SAME ORIGIN. SIGNED W.F. LEVERTON, OCT 24, 1972, UNQUOTE.

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IT IS DR LEVERTON'S THOUGHT THAT THIS INCIDENT HAS NOT BEEN PASSED THROUGH PROPER CHANNELS IN [REDACTED] HE EXPRESSED FEAR CONCERNING GETTING OTHERWISE COOPERATIVE PEOPLE INTO TROUBLE CONCERNING THIS INCIDENT; HOWEVER, THE DIPLOMACY OF THIS MATTER CERTAINLY MUST BE LEFT TO HIGHER AUTHORITY.

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GENERAL STAFF