

## Aurora Redux

Message posted by [Steve Douglass](#) on January 03, 2006 at 18:05:33 PST:

Thought the group might be interested in the following excerpt from the February issue of Popular Communications magazine in my utility news Digest column:

-Steve Douglass

Aurora Redux.

Remember Aurora? The almost mythical Mach 5 + methane breathing unicorn of a spy plane that aviation buffs, journalists thought existed despite non-denial denials issued by the Pentagon in the early 1990s?

Well it seems new evidence has come to light, some of it backed up by a radio communications interception.

The most talked about sighting from a reliable and trained observer was the famous "Chris Gibson" sighting of 1989. Gibson (an accomplished aircraft observer having served 12 years with the Royal Observers Corps) witnessed a strange wedge-shaped aircraft being refueled by a KC-135 and accompanied by two F-111 chase planes flying over the North Sea. Gibson at the time was an oil engineer working on a North Sea drilling platform. Because of Gibson's credentials the sighting stirred much interest in aviation press.

This is what I wrote about the *campaign* to discredit the Chris Gibson sighting in my book "The Comprehensive Guide To Military Monitoring and on my old website Project Black.

"Soon steps were made from within the Defense Department to debunk the evidence. The USAF went so far as to hire experts at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Lincoln Laboratories) to discredit the skyquake evidence. They analyzed one of the seismic tracings recorded from Catalina island and in a report stated that the aircraft in question was a run-of-the-mill F-14 Tomcat on a flight test mission off the California Coast.

This explanation didn't fly with the aviation press because according to an earlier study released by the USAF Flight Test Center, sonic booms emitted by an aircraft flying at 50,000 feet only extend about 25 miles from the point of origin. Some of the seismic sensors recording the sonic booms were located 80 miles inland.

Besides the sonic signatures weren't classic sonic-boom "N" waves but rather a series of booms, rapid rolling booms unlike those of any conventional fighter aircraft.

Then Secretary of the Air Force, Donald Rice, went so far as to issue a blanket denial in a letter to the Washington Post. He said in the letter, " Let me reiterate what I have said publicly for months. The Air Force has no such program either known as "Aurora" or by any other name. And if such a program existed elsewhere, I'd know about it. -- and I don't. Furthermore the Air Force has never created or released cover stories to protect any program like 'Aurora' I can't be more unambiguous than that. When the latest spate of 'Aurora' stories appeared I once again had my staff look into each alleged sighting to see what could be fueling the fire. Some of the reported sightings will never be explained simply because there isn't enough information to investigate."

Rice went on to say, "Other accounts such as the sonic booms over California, the near collision with a commercial airliner and strange shapes loaded into Air Force aircraft. are easily explained and we have done numerous times on the record."

So were these denials the end of Aurora story? Not hardly. Just prior to Rice's letter to the Washington Post, sharp-eared military-radio monitoring hobbyists intercepted a radio phone-patch to the Air Force Special Projects office.

On the 12th of October, 1992 at 2310 GMT, on the (then) Mystic Star frequency of 6.812 MHz, a General Hogle was heard talking to an aide in the Air Force's Public Affairs Office saying " We need to develop a response to inquiries. The guts of this should be we that we have looked at the technical aspects of the sightings and what the logical answers for them are. You can quote Dr. Mori and then site the Lincoln Labs physics and the FAA's efforts to debunk the other incidents. Go through three or four of the sightings, take each one on and conclude with a paragraph that says the fantasy of Aurora doesn't exist."

They went on to discuss the Chris Gibson - North Sea sighting, "Someone saw something accompanied by three F-111s. The

Secretary ants us to talk to McMahan and say it was an F-117.

Although Jane's editor ( and Motorbooks International author of "Aurora" ) Bill Sweetman was able to confirm the conversation did indeed take place and the General Hogle was a high ranking Air Force Special Projects brass hat. Who McMahan" was, was a mystery until now.

Tenacious journalist Bill Sweetman has never been one to let sleeping dogs lie sent me a missive revealing another important part of the Aurora puzzle has fallen in place now placing serious doubt on the Aurora denials by Secretary Rice.

Bill writes (in an e-mail copied to me and Chris Gibson):

"Chris,

I fell down an Internet rabbit hole today and found this guy:

"Mr. Tom McMahan has over 35 years of experience in aerospace government and industry, specializing in advanced technologies such as stealth and counter stealth. He spent 25 years in the Air Force and had oversight responsibility for all Air Force special access programs at the time of his retirement in 1993."

Reference: <http://www4.nas.edu/weber.nsf/0/c60f11befdc99980852570a60057cdc3?OpenDocument>

So who cares?

If you remember, after your sighting was published in 12/92 and the USAF whizzed all over it from the highest levels, Steve Douglass published an intercept of a transmission from a special air mission flight (SAM 204) that had the AF Secretary, Don Rice, and the top uniformed AF flack, BG Woody Hogle, on board. Hogle later confirmed to me that the intercept was genuine. One key phrase, from Hogle to the SecAF Public Affairs office on the ground:

"The Secretary wants us to talk to McMahan and say it was an F-117".

We didn't know who McMahan was at the time, but now we do.

Now, Hogle said then that he recalled using the words "see if it was an F-117" rather than "say it was an F-117" - the latter sounding like Rice had directed his flacks to issue a cover story. But it made no sense either way. Rice, as SecAF, should have known that no F-117 had been in the UK in 8/89 when the sighting took place, because no F-117 had landed outside the US by then.

Anyway, just another interesting data point...

*Bill Sweetman*

So what became of Aurora? Insiders say the true name of the project (a two piece-mothership- recon drone system) was in reality called Brilliant Buzzard and never became fully operational due to serious technical issues and the fact it that it was horrendously expensive and logistically difficult to operate.

Supposedly he Aurora mothership is in flyable storage at Groom Lake but the pulse-detonation wave engine drone has seen service over Afghanistan, Iraq and North Korea which may account for various "donuts on a rope" and sonic boom reports coming from returning U.S.servicemen (from the Middle East) and citizens in the North Korean capital.