

The Alleged SHAPE "Assessment" of UFOs in 1964: What the Official Records Show

The Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), NATO's military headquarters for Europe from 1951-2003 and since 2003 responsible for all of NATO's operations, is not normally associated with Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs). However, Mr. Robert O. Dean, a retired U.S. Army Sergeant Major, has stated in numerous speeches, interviews and internet postings that in 1964 SHAPE prepared a highly classified, limited-distribution document analysing the threat posed by UFOs to NATO, a document with the title "The Assessment: An Evaluation of a Possible Military Threat to NATO Forces in Europe". Furthermore, Mr. Dean has said that he read this document while stationed at SHAPE in the mid-1960s and working in the SHAPE Operations Centre (SHOC), and he has claimed that the report was more than 8 inches thick and full of sightings, alien encounters and even autopsies of the bodies of aliens killed in spaceship crashes. As a result of these claims, SHAPE has been asked on a number of occasions for a copy of this alleged document, and the task of responding to these requests has been given to the SHAPE Historical Office.

The first such request came in 1991. The request was made by a retired four-star officer who had once occupied a very high NATO position, so I took the request quite seriously. I therefore searched through all of SHAPE's historical records - including our classified microfilm reels full of documents from the 1960s - for the document itself or any trace that such a document had ever existed. I also checked with the International Military Staff and the International Staff at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, and I asked the Intelligence Division to check through its old records. All of these searches turned up no trace of the document allegedly seen by Mr. Dean and no indications that any study of UFOs had ever been undertaken. I therefore replied that I could find no record that such a document had ever existed.

As a follow-up to that initial request, a prominent British UFO researcher named Timothy Good, who had been in contact with the retired senior NATO officer and had also met with Mr. Dean while the latter was on a trip to Europe, wrote to SHAPE in July 1993 saying that he had received a photograph of the front cover of "The Assessment". He enclosed this photograph, saying that he hoped it might help us find the document. I then analyzed this alleged cover sheet very carefully by comparing it with genuine classified documents from the mid-1960s and found that there were significant divergences in style, layout and content. Among the major errors was the statement that the document was classified "NATO COSMIC TOP SECRET". Such a classification has never existed at SHAPE or anywhere else in NATO. In NATO's initial years top secret documents were given the classification NATO TOP SECRET, but by the mid-1950s the COSMIC control system had been established for top secret documents created by NATO, and since then all of NATO's top secret documents have been given the designation COSMIC TOP SECRET but never "NATO COSMIC TOP SECRET", which is redundant and incorrect. (Incidentally, the term COSMIC has nothing to do with UFOs or the cosmos; it is simply a codeword chosen in the 1950s to control access to NATO's top secret information.) The alleged cover sheet also stated that the document required "ULTRA" access. However, ULTRA was a very sensitive codeword used during World War II by the British government to protect information obtained from their code-breaking operations against the Germans, and it was still a very strictly-controlled and

highly-sensitive term in the 1960s, prior to its existence finally being revealed to the public by a book in the early 1970s. The British would never have consented to this codeword being used again in NATO, and it is a fundamental rule of security not to use the same access codeword for very different operations with different rules of access. Finally, the COSMIC TOP SECRET (CTS) control number (all documents bearing this very high level of security clearance are tightly controlled with individual control numbers for each copy of the document) was in a format that was not consistent with other SHAPE CTS documents from the 1960s, and the control number was also in the wrong location on the cover sheet. I therefore concluded that this alleged cover sheet was a forgery and passed this information on to Mr. Good and the former senior NATO officer.

I cannot say for sure who actually prepared the forged cover sheet given to SHAPE by Mr. Good, but the preparer must have had some personal knowledge of SHAPE during the mid-1960s because the name of an officer mentioned on the alleged cover sheet is that of a German officer who actually served in the SHAPE Operations Division at that time. And it is interesting to note that in an interview published in the April 1994 issue of *Omni* Magazine – [A.J.S. Rayl, "Inside the Military UFO Underground: Three Insiders Describe a Military Underground Awash in UFOs"](#) – Mr. Dean is quoted as saying, "I wanted so badly to copy this thing. I did take a photograph of the cover sheet, which wasn't in and of itself classified. But I didn't want to wind up in Fort Leavenworth. So instead I would go to the bathroom and take notes surreptitiously, very carefully." Thus in 1994 Mr. Dean stated that he personally took a photograph of the cover sheet. However, in his January 2006 interview with Dr. Michael E. Salla (["Command Sergeant Major Robert Dean, NATO's Secret UFO Assessment, and Setting the Record Straight"](#)) Mr. Dean said that photographs of the alleged cover sheet were sent to him anonymously after he had visited SHAPE in 1993 while in Europe to attend a UFO conference, and he made no mention of his earlier account of having taken the photograph himself.

In his 1994 *Omni* interview Mr. Dean provided some additional information about the alleged "Assessment". He stated that only 15 copies were published, in the languages English, German and French. However, this cannot be true, because official documents published by SHAPE and NATO Headquarters are prepared only in the two official NATO languages – English and French – not in German.

On a more positive note, SHAPE's historical records do confirm that Mr. Dean served at SHAPE during the time he said he saw "The Assessment" and that he could well have worked in the SHAPE Operations Centre. SHAPE Personnel Rosters from that period show that a Sergeant First Class Robert O. Dean, US Army, was assigned to SHAPE from the summer of 1963 through the spring of 1967. His name is first found on the personnel roster effective 1 August 1963, which suggests that he arrived during the month of July, because he is not found on the roster effective 1 July 1963. During 1963 and up to November 1964 he is shown as working in the Operations Division at SHAPE, always in the rank of Sergeant First Class. Sometime between November 1964 and August 1965 (there are gaps in our holdings of personnel rosters from this period) he transferred to the Personnel and Administration (PANDA) Division of SHAPE, still in the rank of Sergeant First Class, and served as the Chief Clerk of the Language Services Branch. Finally in April 1967 he is shown as a Master Sergeant holding the position of clerk in the PANDA section of the SHAPE

Termination Group, the personnel who shut down the old headquarters facility outside of Paris while the new headquarters near Mons, Belgium was activated. He must have been promoted to Sergeant Major (E-9) later in his career, because he never served at SHAPE in this rank.

While I was conducting the initial research into Mr. Dean's service at SHAPE, Mr. Good also provided me with a photocopy of a document that he had been given as proof of Mr. Dean's assignment to SHAPE in 1963. This document – on SHAPE letterhead from Paris, France, and dated 20 June 1963 - states that Robert O. Dean was a Master Sergeant (E-8) and NCOIC (Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge) of the Intel-Security Section of the Operations Division. The document further alleged that Sergeant Dean had been granted a "COMSIC TOP SECRET (ULTRA)" clearance. There are several important inaccuracies in this document. The date seems slightly too early, since Sergeant Dean is not shown on the personnel roster that was effective 1 July 1963, but Operations Division could possibly have been tardy in adding him to the roster. More significantly, Sergeant Dean was not a Master Sergeant (E-8) at this time but a Sergeant First Class (E-7) and he remained in the latter rank throughout his time in the Operations Division and even for a while after his transfer to the Personnel and Administration Division. Furthermore, the section allegedly headed by Sergeant Dean – Intelligence and Security Section – did not exist in Operations Division in 1963 or any time thereafter; there was a Counter Intelligence and Security Section at SHAPE in 1963, but it was part of the Intelligence Division, not the Operations Division. And in the 1960s all "sections" (administrative sub-units of the staff divisions) at SHAPE were headed by full colonels or lieutenant colonels (and their Navy equivalents), not by sergeants. In addition, the clearance allegedly granted to Sergeant Dean - COSMIC TOP SECRET (ULTRA) - does not exist and has never existed in the NATO classification system. As previously mentioned, ULTRA was a British codeword during World War II and has never been used in combination with the NATO classification COSMIC TOP SECRET. Finally, the stationery itself was not correct for a security clearance document but was instead the normal SHAPE letterhead stationery used for unclassified correspondence. I therefore concluded that this alleged security clearance document was a forgery, made by someone who had at some point had access to pre-1967 SHAPE letterhead stationery from Paris (which anyone who worked in the headquarters at that time could easily have obtained) and who knew that NATO does have a codeword for access to very sensitive information and that this codeword is always placed in parentheses after the primary classification COSMIC TOP SECRET, but who forgot what the true codeword is (and I prefer not to say what it is because I do not want to assist the work of future forgers). While the alleged security clearance form is thus quite definitely a forgery, Mr. Dean would certainly have held a COSMIC TOP SECRET clearance during his time at SHAPE, because that level of clearance was a requirement for everyone working in the secure areas of SHAPE Headquarters in those days.

Mr. Dean has never stated that he is the individual who provided Mr. Good with the forged SHAPE document allegedly containing his "COSMIC TOP SECRET (ULTRA)" security clearance. However, Mr. Dean does continue to maintain that the access codeword ULTRA is a valid U.S. codeword that originated in the 1950s and is used to deal with "alien activities or UFO sightings", according to his January 2006 interview. This is definitely not correct. As previously stated, ULTRA is a codeword that was created in the late 1930s and used by the United Kingdom and the United States during World War II and afterward, until the whole

codebreaking project finally became known to the public in the early 1970s. Sensitive access codewords are never re-used for different projects, and ULTRA refers only to the information derived from breaking the machine-generated codes used in German messages during World War 2.

In response to critics who have questioned whether a sergeant would have had access to what was allegedly one of NATO's most highly classified documents, Mr. Dean stated in his January 2006 interview that while he was at SHAPE the headquarters maintained "hundreds of thousands of documents that were classified 'Cosmic Top Secret'. The idea of a 'Need to Know' to deal with classified material is kind of silly." These statements are incorrect. As someone who has worked extensively in the microfilms of SHAPE's records from that period, I can state quite categorically that there never were "hundreds of thousands" of COSMIC TOP SECRET (CTS) documents. If this had been true, the work of the headquarters would have ground to a halt very quickly, because each page of such a document must be accounted for and access is strictly limited. And when CTS documents bear an additional special access codeword – but not ULTRA! – then access is even more strictly limited and definitely based on the "Need to Know" principle, and such highly classified documents are not simply dropped off on a sergeant's desk for him to read during a boring night shift. This is still true today and was even more important at the height of the Cold War in the 1960s, when Mr. Dean served at SHAPE, because the threat of Warsaw Pact espionage was very real and taken very seriously.

Conclusions

The information available in SHAPE's historical records confirms that Mr. Robert O. Dean was stationed at SHAPE from 1963 to 1967 and that he worked initially in the Operations Division in the rank of Sergeant First Class. Thus it is quite possible that he served in the SHAPE Operations Centre (SHOC) for a time. However, all documents that have been supplied to us as proof that so-called "Assessment" actually existed are forgeries.

Even if a document such as "The Assessment" had actually ever existed, it would not have been kept in the registry of the SHAPE Operations Centre, which was concerned solely with operational matters and thus only kept operations-related documents like emergency war plans in its safes. Instead, such a document would have been kept in the registry of the Intelligence Division, which was responsible for analyzing threats to NATO (and that is what the "Assessment" allegedly assesses – the threat posed by UFOs to NATO). Sergeant Dean never served in the Intelligence Division, despite some incorrect claims floating around the internet that he was an intelligence analyst while at SHAPE, and as already noted earlier, the SHAPE Intelligence Division, which keeps good records of its old documents, was unable to find any indication that a document such as the "Assessment" ever existed.

In conclusion, extensive searches of NATO and SHAPE archives have failed to find the alleged "Assessment" itself or even the slightest hint that such a study was ever carried out. Given the huge effort that Mr. Dean alleges went into this study and the extended time period during which it was prepared (2½ years according to Mr. Dean), it seems inconceivable that not even the slightest trace of this massive study and the resulting "Assessment" would remain anywhere in NATO or SHAPE, if the document had actually

existed. I therefore stand by my original conclusion from 1991, which is that no such document was ever produced by SHAPE or NATO and thus it could not have been seen by Mr. Dean while he served at SHAPE.

While some readers may dismiss these conclusions as being part of some big NATO cover-up of the existence of UFOs, I would like to point out that I am not saying that UFOs do or do not exist, I am simply showing that there is absolutely no plausible evidence that SHAPE prepared a huge "Assessment" of UFOs in the 1960s. In those days SHAPE was very busy preparing plans and running military exercises to defend Western Europe against the very real threat posed by the Soviet Union, so investigating the much less tangible threat posed by UFOs was the least of our worries.

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Official NATO Document