

The New Debunkers: Sparks & Greenwood Rehash Klass

By Dr. Robert M. Wood and Ryan S. Wood

In this years' MUFON symposium proceedings Brad Sparks and Barry Greenwood claim to show new "proof" that the Majestic 12 documents are a hoax. Through a tangle of theories worthy of the late debunker Philip Klass – they claim that the MJ-12 documents stem from isolated hoaxers at Kirtland Air Force Base (AFB), New Mexico, who defrauded even the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Ignoring critical evidence in the MJ-12 documents and claiming vast knowledge of the intelligence world, Sparks and Greenwood scoff that the MJ-12 documents do not deserve further study.

By contrast, the Majestic Documents Research Team, led by Dr. Robert M. Wood and Ryan S. Wood, believes that serious researchers deserve more than tabloid conspiracy theories and urge those who are informed on the extent of Majestic research to read the new MUFON paper to judge for themselves if it is based on relevant and reliable new evidence with sound reasoning. Below we touch on key issues. We remain confident that many of the MJ-12 documents show evidence of authenticity and that Sparks and Greenwood do indeed describe an early hoax, though not the one they claim. Since their paper's publication, we learn that Mr. Greenwood has disputed Mr. Sparks's version, and so has another claimed co-author Ms. Mary Castner who has challenged Sparks's version.

Sparks and Greenwood claim to be reporting the results of "a research project to review and investigate the secret Pratt tapes and files." None of the secret tapes or files are shared word-for-word (nor were previously released to independent researchers), so the reader has no way to assess independently the credibility of this new source of information at the paper's MUFON release. Sparks and Greenwood claim that these tapes and files, when added together with other well-known material, make it clear that a few individuals in the Air Force have been responsible for faking several classic documents relating to MJ-12, the alleged government project to study UFOs in sophisticated detail.

Although most of the Sparks, Greenwood (and Castner?) focus is on the so-called Aquarius documents and the related Eisenhower Briefing Document (EBD), the inference and statement is that all MJ-12 documents are fake, noting that the authors Wood and Wood "apparently have never met an MJ-12 document they did not like" and were

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“overly accepting.” Actually, we have long thought that the Aquarius document was indeed a hoax just as stated.

Furthermore, we have possession of individual pages of original, old paper documents stamped MAJIC with the proper age of red ink. Such facts have been totally ignored by the paper, which largely focuses on the deceptions going on for potential fakery in the late 1970s and 1980s.

BACKGROUND. The fundamental story told by the MJ-12 documents is this: unconventional craft have maneuvered over the United States, causing enormous concern to our nation’s security agencies, and some craft have faltered to earth where highly secret, and sometimes illegal, operations have recovered extraordinary technology and non-human creatures. All means were authorized to hide and discredit these phenomena. If you do not believe such events are possible, then you will reject the MJ-12 documents, and you will interpret other information through this same lens of denial. Conversely, if you suspect such events may have happened, you would expect to see some leaked documents like MJ-12 from whistleblowers.

Indeed, in the paper itself Sparks describes himself as “a lifelong UFO skeptic of ETH [extraterrestrial hypothesis] and as the original Roswell skeptic.” Not surprisingly, Sparks and Greenwood have long debunked MJ-12 and label those who believe the documents deserve serious research as either gullible or dishonest. Years before their alleged “new” evidence, Sparks in particular denounced anyone corroborating phenomena that the Majestic papers describe in compelling detail. He dubbed the late Lt. Col. Philip J. Corso as “a fraud in the most embarrassing way [who] just cannot resist putting himself at the center stage of great events of history.”

While describing UFO debunker Phil Klass as “my friend and colleague,” Sparks dismisses Edward J. Ruppelt, respected former director of Projects Grudge and Blue Book and author of the book *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, as demonstrating “a pattern of deceit” detrimental to UFO research. Mr. Sparks appears to be the only person to have come to this conclusion. UFO researcher Jerome Clark writes, “Most observers of Blue Book agree that the Ruppelt years comprised the project’s golden age, when investigations were most capably directed and conducted. Ruppelt himself was open-minded about UFO’s, and his investigators were not known, as Grudge’s were, for force-fitting explanations on cases.”

CLAIMED AUTHORITY. MUFON readers deserve to know Sparks’s and Greenwood’s predisposition, since their paper rests squarely on the authors’ mindset,

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extensive speculations and theories. While Sparks and Greenwood may not judge Corso worthy of “center stage” (although Corso served at far higher levels than they) – the paper begins with page after page of Sparks’s claims, such as interviewing “some 100 CIA Directors, Deputy Directors, Assistant Directors, and various intelligence officials of the CIA, NSA, DIA, Air Force and Naval Intelligence and other agencies”; uncovering “the watershed event in all of government history in UFO studies”; and explaining the Kenneth Arnold sightings as “a spectacular meteor fireball that escaped back into space instead of the classic ‘discs’ which launched the modern UFO era in 1947.” He presents no evidence.

According to his lengthy credits: “Brad also discovered that the CIA had concluded at that point that UFO’s were extraterrestrial (until the AF deception), and this was confirmed by the CIA director and deputy director of its Office of Scientific Intelligence.” Again, he presents no evidence. Sparks writes: “He [Brad himself] is presently reconstructing the full history of U.S. Intelligence Community involvement with UFO’s.” We wonder how he knows, unless he is a member of the Senior Intelligence Service, with clearances equal to the Director of National Intelligence, with a need-to-know, endless files, and a large staff. Is it possible that Sparks’s claimed conversations with some secret-keepers has, just possibly, left a few things out? Or that FOIA requests barely scrape the surface?

Yet with the exception of compiling lists of Blue Book cases, Sparks has scarcely published, and we look forward to seeing evidence of his work that purportedly offers the definitive version of “all of government history in UFO studies” – a “full history of U.S. Intelligence Community involvement with UFO’s” – and why Kenneth Arnold saw a “meteor fireball that escaped back into space” and not what he clearly reported. Sparks and Greenwood (who more modestly states he has been “a financial and electronic distribution clerk for the U.S. Postal Service since 1970”) say they co-founded Citizens Against UFO Secrecy (CAUS), but this means little in recent decades since their admitted falling out with attorney Peter Gersten, its director, “in the early 80’s” – nearly twenty years ago.

REAL TOPIC. While introducing many other tangents and theories, they claim to focus on tabloid-style revelations that the late Mr. Robert Pratt, retired reporter for the “National Enquirer,” made notes and telephone recordings of his conversations with Mr. William L. Moore and former Air Force Technical Sergeant Richard C. Doty. Apparently, MUFON secreted Pratt’s recordings in files marked “PRATT SENSITIVE,” and we wonder about their legality (Sparks’s paper describes them as “secret” recordings), despite reported insistence by Pratt’s widow that the telephone recordings

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were not illegal. (Moore and/or Doty can confirm whether or not they knew their conversations were being tape recorded over the telephone.)

Yet MUFON readers and serious researchers will recognize Moore and Doty, the Pratt sources, as two of the most notorious sources in Ufology. Moore, we recall, informed a stunned MUFON conference that he had collaborated with security officials to deceive them. Doty has fed story after dubious story to several researchers.

It is on this alleged loom and from this thread that Sparks and Greenwood weave a tapestry of accusations from which they conclude MJ-12, in Greenwood's words, is like Hitler's "Big Lie." Greenwood reassures us, however, that "it is not necessarily true that all conspiratorial behavior by government representatives should be viewed as part of official policy." (To take Greenwood's comparison at his word, was Hitler not a part of Germany's "official policy"?) And Sparks reassures us that "one cannot in general infer the existence of a supersecret merely from such efforts as AFOSI's [Air Force Office of Special Investigations] to protect the AF's turf against UFOlogist challengers." Instead, they claim, MJ-12 is the invention of a small coven of turf-conscious Air Force officials all by themselves in New Mexico, hating Ufology and feuding with the National Security Council (NSC), CIA, Army and Navy.

We are not so readily reassured. Greenwood, it is reported, believes this was done for profit. Sparks says it was done in a kind of anti-ufology 'hatred.' We are not convinced to cease our investigations based on Sparks's assurance not to "infer ... a "supersecret," and merely consider it a scuffle among a few 'lone gunman' Air Force folks in New Mexico against, among others, the purportedly gullible Central Intelligence Agency and the purportedly innocuous, Presidential-level National Security Council.

SOURCES AND METHODS. We want to state clearly that the Majestic Documents Research Team cannot yet give a direct account of the Pratt papers. All we have had till recently are Sparks's and Greenwood's (and Castner's?) interpretations. MUFON released Pratt's materials specifically to the two and did not give any hint to us of their contents and impending, dramatic release. Sparks and Greenwood (and Castner?) had the time they wanted in secret to construct their nearly 70-page, circular paper. We were offered the opportunity to respond initially on two weeks' notice without access to the alleged evidence. Because we brought this clearly to MUFON's attention, MUFON has now agreed to make some Pratt material available online.

We expect to give an update on the Pratt papers in the October MUFON journal. It may prove that the Pratt papers are a separate matter from the MUFON conference paper

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(hereinafter referred to as Sparks's paper, given that Greenwood and Castner have, perhaps for different reasons, disavowed Sparks). But there are points already clear about Sparks's paper itself. *[Note: with the emergence of this embarrassing controversy, while MUFON's original conference paper remains highlighted for worldwide download, MUFON published an altered version of the paper attributed only to Sparks in its monthly journal.]*

Sparks's paper elevates Pratt. He writes: "Pratt had written extensively about UFO's as a reporter for the 'National Enquirer,' during a serious phase of the 'Enquirer's' history when it exercised responsible journalism." MUFON readers may want to get a strong cup of coffee as they consider this case. Linda Moulton Howe has written about evidence that the "National Enquirer" was established from the outset as a front for CIA disinformation. In his book *The Missing Times: News Media Complicity in the UFO Cover-up*, journalist Terry Hansen writes:

The newspaper's historical ties to powerful organizations such as the OSS, the CIA, the Pentagon, the White House, and the Mafia, raise troubling questions about its true agenda. To the uninitiated, though, the Enquirer seems hardly worth taking seriously. With its blaring, often absurd headlines and near-ubiquitous location alongside grocery store checkout stands across the nation, the Enquirer has become both a cliché and the butt of jokes among those who consider themselves sophisticated media consumers. There's much more to the National Enquirer than meets the eye, however. To see why, we need to review the Enquirer's fascinating origins, with particular emphasis on its ties to the U.S. intelligence establishment.

Even if we accept that Pratt remained blissfully innocent of the phony newspaper from which he retired, Pratt is not a fount of perfect recollection. Hansen reports that he questioned Pratt's involvement in an Enquirer story tending to discredit reports that UFO's appeared over ICBM missile bases. Hansen writes:

"Is there any reason to believe this story was purposely leaked to the Enquirer?" I asked Pratt. ... "None whatsoever," he replied. ... Following my initial series of questions, Pratt did further research on the matter and was now less confident in his first response. "By coincidence, just a few hours after sending you the answers to your first set of questions, I came across some documents relating to the 1975 over-flights," he wrote. "And there is a possibility that you may be right that someone did tip off the Enquirer with the intention of discrediting the information. ... [In respect to his contacts with UFO sources, again his memory

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wanders ...] This whole thing surprises me because I have no recollection of receiving such a phone call, nor do I remember working with Brad Sparks [the other researcher mentioned in his notes] on these incidents," Pratt added.

So we learn that Sparks has not approached the "PRATT SENSITIVE" files from a disinterested perspective. He had a history with Pratt, and we should know more about it. We are told further that Pratt recorded telephone conversations concerning Moore and Doty secretly leaking research by UFO researcher and nuclear physicist Stanton Friedman. Sparks insists that Friedman's careful research was used as the basis for hoaxes, but refuses to consider that Friedman's data came from a priori leaks of the truth, eye witnesses, and obscure, sometimes surprising, revelations now openly verified in historical archives. Nevertheless, it is on the basis of Pratt, Moore and Doty – alleged phone recordings and known dissemblers – that Sparks's contentious paper alleges its proof of a grand hoax. *[Note: more recently we have obtained access to at least some of the Pratt papers now posted on the MUFON website after we told MUFON our concerns. Nowhere do these papers nor their alleged sources make the claims of fakery that Sparks himself advances.]*

REAL HOAX. From page to page of conspiracy theories qualified by "supposedly" – "assume/assumes/assumed" – "seem/seemed/seems/seemingly" (Acrobat software gives an easy word count of all these instances) ... there are then juxtaposed absolute assurances such as: "Moreover there is no known precedent in AFOSI history or U.S. intelligence history or world intelligence history of an active duty intelligence officer forging documents for sale or for profit." MUFON readers will decide for themselves whether Sparks or Greenwood can know any such thing.

But MUFON readers will not have to decide whether the paper presents new arguments, since the evidence is crystal clear that it does not. Perhaps to sad surprise, the paper is a rehash and gloss on a report published by Philip Klass himself in the "The Skeptics UFO Newsletter" (SUN) #44, March 1997 – ten years before the Sparks's paper presented at the recent MUFON conference. (The Klass article is available after some digging online at <http://www.csicop.org/klassfiles/SUN-44.html>. If it disappears from the Internet, we will be glad to provide a full copy.) Greenwood and Castner will have to say whether they knew that Sparks's paper rehashes Klass, but at the outset of his original article, Klass compliments Sparks himself by name:

On April 16, 1983--less than two years before William L. Moore and Jaime Shandera claim they received the "Top Secret/Eyes Only" MJ-12 documents from an unknown source--Moore reportedly sought the reaction of his friend Brad

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Sparks, a respected UFO researcher, to the idea of creating such counterfeit government documents. Sparks strongly recommended against it. Later, when Sparks called Stanton T. Friedman, he was shocked to discover that Friedman defended Moore's idea.... Moore explained to Sparks that his and Friedman's efforts to locate persons who had been involved in (alleged) crashed-saucer recovery operations in New Mexico, and subsequent related events, had run into a dead end. During the April 16, 1983, meeting in Berkeley, Calif., Moore suggested that counterfeit government documents containing crashed-saucer information could be used to induce former military personnel to speak out and ignore their secrecy oaths. Sparks urged Moore not to resort to bogus documents, pointing out that if they contained any factual errors, this would identify the documents as counterfeit to those privy to the true facts. This, Sparks warned, could ruin Moore's reputation. SUN first learned of Sparks' involvement in mid-1991 but he was reluctant to speak out.

We must honestly consider this: how did Klass know so much about Sparks's thoughts and inner motives in the midst of all his alleged noble endeavors?

Klass's decade-old article covers the same arguments that the current Sparks paper presents as new, now presented with the patina of Pratt's possibly covert telephone recordings. It is interesting that Klass even cites how "extremely painstaking analysis by UFO-researcher Robert G. Todd has revealed one of the cleverest counterfeit Roswell-related documents ever discovered" (though this analysis is not revealed). Sparks likewise cites Todd seven times in the recent paper. We invite MUFON readers and serious researchers to observe the multiple parallels between the Klass article and the Sparks (Greenwood and Castner?) paper. They could not be more plain.

The hoax, we think, might be to argue that Sparks's paper represents anything significant or new – except perhaps the "wilderness of mirrors" in which some UFO researchers (Sparks and Moore), prominent debunkers (Klass), tabloid reporters (Pratt) and government agents (Doty) have conducted decades of hidden discussions – more than most of us realize.

EVIDENCE. We keep going back to seeking the evidence. That is the task of the Majestic Documents Research Team. Again, Sparks (and Greenwood or Castner?) state that "the overly accepting Woods ... have apparently never met an MJ-12 document they did not like." Interestingly, the precursor Klass article brings up the so-called Aquarius briefing, as does Sparks in his rehash. In point of fact, as noted above, Dr. Bob Wood has stated that he does not believe the Aquarius document is authentic. We recognize

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that the Majestic documents may be tainted with some that “poison the barrel.” We do not know the actual motives if this is the case, though we do know clearly that this is a well established disinformation technique. (Why go to this trouble if not to discredit others that are genuine?) Pratt himself quotes estimates that it would take only a minimal effort by security agencies to co-opt and compromise “ufology” organizations. The same is true of seeking to discredit valid leaked documents.

We are ready to believe or disbelieve based on the truth indicated by open evidence and sound reasoning. Our team’s website (www.majesticdocuments.com) (a) discusses explicit issues of authentication; (b) assigns ratings based on explicit factors, which differentiates documents; and (c) candidly discusses psychological warfare and disinformation. Ryan Wood of our team was the first to report in the highly praised book *MAJIC EYES ONLY* (www.majiceyesonly.com) that the source known as “Cantwheel” admitted some of the documents he conveyed were “obvious fakes” re-typed from originals so that the recipient would not be vulnerable under espionage laws. Wood writes candidly that this must “raise questions about apparent delivery of some documents in facsimile, designed to avoid legal consequences. We must research this further, and it does raise serious questions.”

We do not have space in this article to provide exhaustive discussion of our research over the past decade into the Majestic documents. We have published steadily in print and online – as has Stanton Friedman and others – and we will continue the professional discussion this November at the “UFO Crash-Retrieval Conference” in Las Vegas, NV (www.ufoconference.com). Nevertheless, let us offer a few final comments here.

The Sparks paper makes repeated disparaging statements about Mr. Timothy Cooper. We do know from an official citation that Cooper’s father was commended for work on the Air Force UFO program, which could explain why Tim Cooper might be trusted as a recipient of a number of the MJ-12 transmittals. In a detailed presentation to the Society for Scientific Exploration in 2004, Dr. Wood documented that 103 documents totaling 3,766 pages had emerged from multiple sources, not only through Cooper as sometimes alleged. He noted that expert forensic analysis had not supported allegations that Cooper had typed the documents. Cooper – who has never sought publicity nor money for the documents, some of which he himself doubted – voluntarily took a lie detector test concerning the documents and did poorly only on questions relating to revealing source names he had sworn to protect.

What we do know is that we have found extensive corroboration of the documents’ content from known and accepted sources, as well as detailed and before-unknown

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correspondence of MJ-12 documents to others accepted as authentic. Not all documents present the same level of assurance, although some are convincing. Furthermore, among the documents are some that we possess in original paper and ink. Expert forensic testing finds that the paper and ink fit their claimed historical timeframe. Elsewhere we have discussed openly and in detail the reasons we believe this body of documents – whose volume, variety and detail are staggering – deserve serious, intensive study.

Even then, in theory, they could be faked with the extensive funds, underlying research, and exhaustive man-hours of a determined and expert intelligence apparatus. But we have not yet by any means come to this conclusion. Some could be faked to “muddy the waters” and discredit authentic leaks. While Sparks (Greenwood may agree or possibly Castner?) theorizes that the MJ-12 documents (all 3,766 pages in exacting, varied detail) were faked by a few Air Force miscreants in New Mexico and deceived the naïve CIA itself, we know from excellent work by one of our team members that some documents were mailed to Cooper with postage from a meter that was traced to CIA Headquarters. At root, the MJ-12 papers describe elusive, UFO phenomena that thousands of people have observed worldwide and that have not, we believe, all been faked by the United States Air Force. Nor, we believe, have all these documents.

DISINFORMATION. One area in which we must agree with Sparks, Greenwood (and Castner?) is this: some entities have acted aggressively to deceive and subvert UFO research in the public realm. No doubt, given the infamous and clumsy Doty affair, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations has played a part. But we find no evidence to support Sparks’s and Greenwood’s conclusion that the MJ-12 documents come from a few ‘lone-gunman’ hoaxers at Kirtland AFB. An expert consultant gave us permission to quote him directly (though he frankly avoids professional association with “ufology”):

Having served in matters with the White House, the Pentagon, the State Department, and the Intelligence Community, I can say that the paper’s conclusion has no bearing on how government works. The welter of supposition that leads to claiming a mid-level enlisted man fronting for a few security officers in a single OSI district in New Mexico discounts ample evidence that DCI Smith and the Psychological Strategy Board were involved deeply with this subject well beyond the Air Force. That a local AFOSI office would feel free to fake NSC documents is akin to the counter help at McDonalds feeling free to write and publish a false corporate annual report and expect it to fly on Wall Street. The very last thing such a group could do is to fake other agencies’ documents without incurring extraordinary bureaucratic and political penalties. The gratuitous argument about the Interplanetary Phenomenon Unit (IPU), thrown in with the

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kitchen sink, runs counter to publicly admitted facts and has nothing to do with the Pratt materials. The author has a penchant for claiming inside knowledge that he refuses to reveal or substantiate.

While the recent MUFON paper stands principally on its claims to privileged access not only to Pratt's notes and "secret" telephone recordings but also to a vast trove of alleged "insider" information from military, intelligence and other government sources, it is reasonable to ask whether and how Sparks and his cohorts could know what they claim. What has been their involvement, and by what expertise can they tell us how the Executive Office of the President (the institutional home for the National Security Council) actually functions with regard to UFOs? And how has their interpretation of alleged "inside" knowledge been influenced by their pre-existing relationships between Sparks, Moore, Doty, Pratt and Klass? These are matters that require considerably greater explanation.

Our honest questions reflect a general problem in studying UFOs and related institutions and commentators. Since the Majestic 12 documents report perhaps the most intensive effort ever imagined to hide UFO phenomena, perhaps in order to preserve power and privilege (some legitimate, some not) – can we doubt that such efforts would include classic ploys to discredit leaks, denigrate open research, and confuse and fracture public and professional interest?

Preceding and during the years in which the "PRATT SENSITIVE" files were withheld even from dues-paying MUFON members and advisors, we observe that the public ufology organizations have been just as jealous of their own files as the intelligence agencies have been of theirs! (Some have argued that ufology organizations are convenient instruments for security agencies to keep tabs on public awareness of specific sightings and leaks). In such a climate of secrecy, suspicion and misty credentials, some ufology data occasionally spark sensationalism breeding more heat than light -- but have ultimately been buried or blurred as factions fall prey to incapacity, manipulation and irrelevance. No wonder mainstream scholars avoid this field.

CONCLUSION. New views, even controversial, can be valuable, so we do not object to honest debate. Yet this latest paper from Sparks, MUFON and perhaps others (we need to know, for example, what Greenwood and Castner have to say for themselves) raises keen questions about the standards of evidence, caliber of reasoning and processes of professional discourse affecting UFO studies – versus the standards in professional disciplines where many of us have worked at responsible levels for decades. We will

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discuss this further at the fifth annual UFO Crash Retrieval Conference in Las Vegas this November 2007 – *www.ufoconference.com*.

After careful study of MUFON's paper, we are not dissuaded from further Majestic document research. We believe that the importance of these documents remains clear. Just as we admire those who seek physical evidence, as well as the pioneers who have explored psycho-spiritual implications of UFOs – we also face that the revolutionary possibility of visitation by non-human sentience must have surely engaged our political, military, intelligence and other social institutions at a deep level. The Majestic 12 documents -- including those that may have been faked for purposes important to discover – reflect this and deserve research. One might say that the Majestic 12 documents are either the fire, or they are the smoke from the fire.

In addition to the documents themselves, the recent flurry over Sparks's interpretation of the Pratt notes and telephone recordings leads us to consider important systemic issues determining whether "ufology" proves to have enduring value, or is bypassed in years to come by far stronger institutions in the mainstream. That is, whether "ufology" advances to the mainstream in line with the standards of scholarly integrity, due process and credentialing that typify the best of modern science in a free society. The challenge is clear for public ufology organizations to do what they have long sought from government: that is, release their files for full, free and open research. Make their data sets fully available. That way, we will lessen the instances of unproductive grandstanding; selective release of "secret" files for the claims of a few; and embarrassing spats that have long discredited UFO research.

The Majestic Documents Research Team continues to focus on detailed evidence regarding the Majestic 12 documents and find nothing in Sparks's paper or Pratt's "secret" telephone recordings that alters the agenda for our work. We proceed within the law and seek to observe research methods long respected within mainstream disciplines. Finally, we want to be clear. We do not question the great majority of military and intelligence professionals who honorably defend our Nation. There are secrets that should be kept, and laws with institutional checks and balances that govern how this is done. On this too – the collective of Sparks, Greenwood, Pratt, Moore, Doty and Klass do not enlighten us.

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