

Claims About a Government “UFO Program”

How Much is True?

BY ROBERT SHEAFFER

FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS AN ORGANIZATION CALLED To The Stars Academy (TTSA), founded by rock singer and Blink-182 front man Tom DeLonge, has sucked the oxygen out of all other discussions of UFO-related matters. If news headlines are to be believed, TTSA has revealed that the government has been operating a secret UFO investigation program, has “released” UFO videos, and “admitted” that UFOs are real. However, as skeptics have so often found, much of what the media reports is inaccurate, incomplete, or just plain false.

What we know is that in 2008 former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid arranged for the Pentagon to give a \$22 million contract to his friend and campaign contributor Robert Bigelow, under a program called AATIP (Advanced Aviation Threat Identification Program). Or was it AAWSAP (Advanced Aerospace Weapon System Applications)? Even TTSA’s people can’t agree whether or not these two acronyms represent the same program: John Greenewald of *The Black Vault* noted that Hal Puthoff of To The Stars Academy, as well as the Pentagon, say that AATIP and AAWSAP were the same program, while Luis Elizondo, also of To The Stars Academy, insists they were not. (And yes, this is the same Hal Puthoff who, with Russell Targ, tested Uri Geller at SRI back in the 1970s.)

For starters, did the U.S. Navy “admit that UFOs are real”? Many news stories claimed that they did. For example, on September 16, 2019, *Popular Mechanics* reported that “The Navy Says Those UFO Videos Are Real. And they were never meant to be released to the public.” The headline is misleading. It’s only at the bottom of the article that we read, “the Pentagon says the aerial objects in the videos are simply unidentified, and for now, unexplained. The Navy is pointedly not saying the objects are flying saucers or otherwise

controlled by aliens” (<https://bit.ly/2TuX7Ju>). Exactly.

As well, the Navy never “released” any of those videos to the public, as To The Stars has been claiming. Somebody leaked them. We don’t know who the leaker is, although we can have our suspicions. (The Navy finally did officially release these three videos on April 27, 2020, although they didn’t provide any additional information. Mick West made an excellent video explaining what these Navy videos probably are: <https://bit.ly/2YjdPj2>.) And this is just a fraction of the confusion surrounding this story.

The Pentagon’s 38 papers on Weird Science

What was the actual purpose of AATIP/AAWSAP? Was it really a UFO investigation program? Despite nonstop claims from Luis Elizondo, Tom DeLonge, and others that AATIP was a government program to study UFOs (or “UAPs”—Unidentified Aerial Phenomena—as they prefer to call them), all attempts to document that claim have failed. The only thing that AATIP can be shown to have produced are 38 papers on weird science, with titles like “Advanced Space Propulsion Based on Vacuum” (Dr. Hal Puthoff) and “Invisibility Cloaking” (Dr. Ulf Leonhardt). Some of these papers are available on line, while others have not been released (<https://bit.ly/2ThPg36>). None of these papers directly relate to investigating UFO reports—several of them seem to take “anomalous vehicles” as a given, and speculate how such vehicles might operate. Given that Bigelow Aerospace Advanced Space Studies (BAASS) was awarded a bit over \$22 million by AATIP, that works out to about \$580,000 per paper on weird science, which is nice work if you can get it.



Figure 1: To The Stars “flagship retail store” in Encinitas, CA sells hats, coffee cups, T-shirts, and books by Tom DeLonge.

Actually, some of the AATIP money seems to have found its way to the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) by way of Bigelow’s sponsorship of MUFON’s “STAR Team Rapid Response UFO Investigation Unit.” Bigelow received his initial federal UFO funds in late 2008, and the one obvious (in hindsight) use of them was (ironically) the contract he signed with MUFON in February, 2009 to fund their STAR Team Impact Project. But MUFON and Bigelow did not get on well, and only about \$324,000 is reported to have been given to MUFON, which was unaware of Bigelow receiving government funds. (<https://bit.ly/2Ib4Bmb>).

“Range Incursions”

Actually, the military seems to be more concerned about “range incursions” by drones and small aircraft than about any Unidentified Flying Objects (or Unidentified Aerial Phenomena) themselves. Aviation maps clearly mark off certain “Military Operations Areas” that are prohibited or restricted for civilian aircraft at certain times, elevations, etc., in support of military operations. Pentagon spokespersons have recently made statements like

the “Unidentified Aerial Phenomena” terminology is

used because it provides the basic descriptor for the sightings/observations of unauthorized/unidentified aircraft/objects that have been observed entering/operating in the airspace of various military-controlled training ranges.

and

We have updated guidelines and simplified the process to facilitate reporting of unidentified aerial phenomena in order to support an objective, data-driven analysis of the range incursions.... Any range incursion by unauthorized craft affects the safety of our aviators and/or the security of our operations. Our revised reporting guidance solicits reports of any unauthorized craft (UAP or UAS) observed within our ranges so that we may investigate that range incursion (<https://bit.ly/2VDHZvV>).

What they seem to be saying is: If an unknown object enters one of their Military Operations Areas, they investigate it as a UAP. If the object is elsewhere, they apparently don’t care.

“Metamaterials”

Last July, To The Stars dramatically announced,

San Diego, CA (July 25, 2019)—To The Stars Acad-

Metamaterials from Unknown Advanced Aerospace Vehicles? Or Common Products of Earthly Manufacturing?

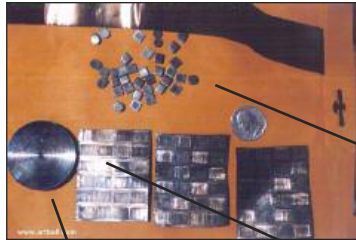
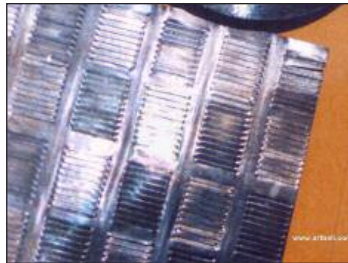


Figure 2: A number of items said to be debris from the crashed Roswell saucer were mailed anonymously to radio host Art Bell and became known as “Art’s Parts.” Some of them are shown in the image on the left from the Art’s Parts webpage. A quarter is included for scale (2001). (<https://bit.ly/32HeVFo>).



This disk closely resembles a “sputter target”—used to help produce microscopically thin coatings in vacuum chambers. (<https://bit.ly/32RZsIQ>)



A thin metal sheet is covered with what appear to be vents or fins for heat exchange, such as those used in an air conditioner or radiator.



These metal slugs resemble those punched out during metal fabrication. They are also created as a base for making items such as small tubes or bottle caps.



Figure 3: More Art’s Parts. A quarter provides a scale for these thin multilayered chips of metallic material. These little slabs may be mysterious—they don’t seem to have any obvious earthly use. But if they are considered to be a byproduct rather than an end product there are many ways they could have been created. Numerous industrial processes (spray painting, vacuum coating, metal grinding, and smelting) produce odd looking accretions or slag. (<https://bit.ly/32HeVFo>)

emy of Arts & Science (TTSA) has acquired multiple pieces of metamaterials and an archive of initial analysis and research for their controversial ADAM Research Project. ADAM, an acronym for Acquisition and Data Analysis of Materials, is an academic research program focused on the exploitation of exotic materials for technological innovation.

The ownership of these assets, which were previously retained and studied by investigative journalist Linda Moulton Howe and are reported to have come from an advanced aerospace vehicle of unknown origin, allows TTSA to conduct rigorous scientific evaluations to determine its function and possible applications.

Linda Moulton Howe is well-known in UFO

circles for having spent decades promoting claims about alien animal mutilations, crop circles, and other far-out stuff. Actually, as far back as 1996 Ms. Howe had arranged to have this sample examined by a metallurgist. He concluded,

the artifact portion provided by LMH does NOT seem to be composed of elements or compounds which are unknown. Nor is it composed of alloys that appear to be of a purity or combination beyond the scope of current material science. The artifact bears a strong resemblance to irregular layered residue often found in large physical vapor deposition (PVD) coaters. This family of filming processes includes sputtering, E-beam, and resistively heated thermal evaporation; all common vacuum processes used widely in

industry. (<https://tinyurl.com/UnidentifiedSeason1>).

In other words, it's probably waste slag produced by some industrial process. This is not a very auspicious beginning for the saga of a supposed extraterrestrial UFO fragment, so Ms. Howe didn't publish it. But the "UFO Watchdog" got the report directly from the metallurgist (<https://bit.ly/38ibpCu>). It gets better. The source of these particular materials have now been identified: They are the pieces previously known fondly as "Art's Parts," which in 1996 were sent anonymously to the late-night talk show maven Art Bell (1945-2018), which he promoted often (<https://bit.ly/32HeVFo>). The "samples" were accompanied by a series of letters making absurd, dramatic claims:

Grandad was part of the Team that went with the surviving occupant. The occupant communicated via telepathic means. It spoke perfect English, and communicated the following:

The Disc was a "probeship" dispatched from a "launchship" that was stationed at the dimensional gateway to the Terran Solar System, 32 light years from Terra. They had been conducting operations on Terra for over 100 years.

So TTSA's best-known "metamaterials" (they apparently have others) were sent anonymously, along with an obviously concocted story, to Art Bell, who gave them to Linda Moulton Howe, who recently said she sold them to Tom DeLonge for \$35,000. Australian researcher Keith Basterfield found that TTSA paid Tom DeLonge \$35,000 for said "metamaterials" (<https://tinyurl.com/LazarTTSA>).

TTSA CRADA with the U.S. Army

Three months later, in October, 2019, To The Stars made another dramatic announcement:

SAN DIEGO—Oct. 17, 2019—To The Stars Academy of Arts & Science (TTSA) announced today a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) with the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command to advance TTSA's materiel and technology innovations in order to develop enhanced capabilities for Army ground vehicles.

TTSA's technology solutions, which leverage developments in material science, space-time metric engineering, quantum physics, beamed energy propulsion, and active camouflage, have the potential to enhance survivability and effectiveness of multiple Army systems. TTSA will share its discoveries with Ground Vehicle System Center (GVSC) and Ground Vehicle Survivability and

Protection (GVSP) and the U.S. Army shall provide laboratories, expertise, support, and resources to help characterize the technologies and its applications.

In other words, the U.S. Army has been suckered into believing claims about "metamaterials" that might potentially be used in combat vehicles! TTSA conveniently provided an "invest now" button for those who actually believe this ridiculous stuff.

Both parties to the agreement were quick to point out that, under the terms of a CRADA, no money changes hands. All that is shared is information. But now because of the "CRADA" between To The Stars and the U.S. Army, DeLonge won't have to pay for high tech testing of "Art's Parts." The U.S. Army will do it for him for free (<https://bit.ly/3cp3x5t>)!

Secret Medical Experiments at the "Skinwalker Ranch"?

Most SKEPTIC readers have probably heard about the so-called "Skinwalker Ranch" near Ft. Duchesne, Utah. Supposedly haunted and filled with all kinds of cryptids and paranormal phenomena, it was purchased in 1996 by Robert Bigelow to study its alleged phenomena. Members of Bigelow's National Institute for Discovery Science (NIDS) stayed on the ranch to do a careful first hand study. One of them was Colm Kelleher, Ph.D., co-author of the 2005 book *Hunt for the Skinwalker*. Another was Dr. Eric Davis, an astronomer who now works at Dr. Hal Puthoff's Institute for Advanced Studies in Austin, Texas, studying weird physics. Despite Bigelow's funding and the investigators' unfettered access to the alleged phenomena,

after several years of [Sherman] family trauma and of focused NIDS investigation, we managed to obtain very little physical evidence of anomalous phenomena, at least no physical evidence that could be considered as conclusive proof of anything (*Hunt for the Skinwalker*, p. 209).

So, all the King's Horses and all the King's Men and all the King's cameras and electronic recording devices could not document anything paranormal occurring at the Skinwalker Ranch, *in spite of scientists spending several years onsite trying to do so*. NIDS never did document anything much happening anywhere, so Bigelow shut down NIDS in 2004. In 2016 he sold the ranch to Adamantium Real Estate, LLC, whose once-anony-

mous owner has just revealed himself to be Brandon Fugal, a wealthy real estate investor from Salt Lake City. Fugal had previously been involved in weird science projects, like “an attempt to create a gravitational reduction device that could produce clean energy” (<https://tinyurl.com/wqg7gtw>). A 2018 documentary movie by Jeremy Corbell, also titled *Hunt for the Skinwalker*, added little that wasn’t already known and was generally panned as pretty lame.

What was the role of AATIP in the Skinwalker Ranch? Apparently there was interest by some in the Pentagon, but very little seems to have happened. According to an unnamed physicist, James T. Lacatski was reportedly seen at the ranch, implying that AATIP was involved. Lacatski is the only person we know to have been the head of AATIP /AAWSAP, despite Elizondo’s claims. In fact, Lacatski is the only person we know to have even worked on AATIP.

One of AATIP’s 38 papers on weird science is “Field Effects on Biological Tissues, Dr. Kit Green, Wayne State University. Alternate Title: Clinical Medical Acute & Subacute Field Effects on Human Dermal & Neurological Tissues” (<https://bit.ly/2VB14yR>). Dr. Green, a former CIA analyst, is a longtime associate of Bigelow and Puthoff. In that paper, Green speculates on the cause of reported injuries said in the UFO literature to have been caused by “close encounters,” and from there he speculates that “Sufficient evidence exists from human injury / effects to reverse engineer certain aspects of the Energy / Propulsion Systems” of the UFOs.

Two former security guards at the Skinwalker Ranch, Chris Marx and Christopher Bartel, believe they were the unwitting victims of secret nonlethal weapons testing by BAASS. This sounds crazy, but they have documented that Bigelow insisted they submit to an MRI brain scan as a condition of employment (<https://bit.ly/2TuWO1i>). (Both Marx and Bartel believe that it was Dr. Kit Green who escorted them to the hospital for their MRI brain scan.) What possible reason could there be for this? Has such a requirement ever been made of any employee before, anywhere?

My suspicion is that there was no “weapons testing,” but more likely a passive monitoring of individuals who, it was presumed, might experience some physiological effects from their presence at Skinwalker. Bigelow’s people apparently believed that “the phenomenon” at Skinwalker might itself have effects on the human body, and they wanted to later be able to document them. This was apparently done without any kind of

notification to the unsuspecting guinea pigs.

Fortunately for all, the “phenomenon” at Skinwalker is almost certainly illusory. Not only was the yearslong monitoring of “Skinwalker” by NIDS unable to obtain proof of anything unusual happening, but the people who owned the property prior to the Shermans, a family whose members lived there 60 years, deny that any mysterious “phenomena” of any kind occurred there (<https://tinyurl.com/WagUFO>). The parsimonious explanation is that the supernatural claims about the ranch were made up by the Sherman family prior to selling it to the gullible Bigelow. Many of the really bizarre alleged incidents described in *Hunt for the Skinwalker* were witnessed only by Terry Sherman, who stayed on the ranch as a caretaker after it was sold to Bigelow.

Unidentified—The Second Season

TTSA’s first season of *Unidentified* on the History channel, six episodes, concluded in July 2019 (<https://bit.ly/38gjq1>). While it didn’t do too badly, ratings-wise, it was consistently beaten by *Ancient Aliens* on that same channel. The final episode, credulously reporting sensational UFO claims from Sicily that are without any proof, was roundly criticized by longtime UFOlogists like Kevin Randle and Steven Bassett as being exceedingly credulous. Steven Bassett is the head of the Paradigm Research Group and is convinced that the government is hiding evidence of aliens. So when Steven Bassett is calling you out for being gullible, that means you must be really, *really* gullible. Nonetheless, a second season of *Unidentified* has been announced and is now in production.

Soon afterward, TTSA announced its second round of funding (<https://bit.ly/3anrBUi>), having raised \$1,370,230 from “investors” in the first round. For those so interested, the minimum investment is 70 shares, which costs \$350. To The Stars recently announced that “TriPoint Global Equities, LLC (“TriPoint”) will act as the lead managing selling agent and sole bookrunner for its current offering,” adding “Using TriPoint as a broker-dealer will open up TTSA’s current offering to all 50 states once filed” (<https://tinyurl.com/TTSAShares>).

“To The Stars” Publishes Bob Lazar’s Autobiography...Covertly!

Most SKEPTIC readers probably already know who Bob Lazar is. For the benefit of those who don’t, here is the promotional blurb from his new book:

Bob Lazar was a brilliant young physicist that found

himself employed at a top secret facility in the middle of the desert outside Las Vegas. Under the watchful eye of the government elite, he is tasked with understanding an exotic propulsion system being used by an advanced aerospace vehicle he is told came from outer space.

The stressful work and long, odd hours start to wear on Bob and he becomes concerned for his safety. He tells his wife and a couple close friends about what he's doing in the desert, and his employers find out and are furious. When they station goons outside his house, Bob seeks help from wealthy UFOlogist, John Lear, who encourages Bob to take his story to award-winning investigative journalist George Knapp at KLAS-TV, a CBS affiliate.

George Knapp is the go-to journalist for all things concerning To The Stars, or Bob Lazar, Robert Bigelow, or anything UFOlogical for that matter. Knapp doesn't care if a story is true or not, so long as it boosts his ratings.

Lazar claims to have gotten degrees in physics from MIT and Caltech. He says he worked on reverse engineering crashed alien saucers at Area 51. They are supposedly powered by Element 115, which ought to be named Lazarium, said to be a wonderful source of power. In 2003, scientists in Russia finally synthesized Element 115, now dubbed "Moscovium." It has a half-life of just 0.65 seconds—Lazar said it would be stable—and appears to be pretty useless for powering interstellar craft...or anything else.

Anyone in UFOlogy with a shred of critical thinking realizes that Lazar's preposterous story is a hoax, from top to bottom. Even the famous "Flying Saucer Physicist," the late Stanton Friedman (1934-2019), consistently maintained that Bob Lazar was a "fraud." Friedman wrote about Lazar's story,

It is all BUNK. Not one shred of evidence has been put forth to support this story: No diplomas, no résumés, no transcripts, no memberships in professional organizations, no papers, no pages from MIT or Caltech yearbooks. He also mentioned, in a phone conversation with me, California State University at Northridge and Pierce Junior College—also in the San Fernando Valley, California. I checked all four schools. Pierce said he had taken electronics courses in the late 1970s. The other three schools never heard of him.... I checked his High School in New York State. He graduated in August, not with his class. The only science course he took was chemistry. He ranked 261 out of 369, which is in the bottom third. There is no way he would have been admitted by MIT or Caltech. An MS in Physics from MIT requires a thesis. No such thesis exists at

MIT, and he is not on a commencement list. The notion that the government wiped his CIVILIAN records clean is absurd. I checked with the Legal Counsel at MIT—no way to wipe all his records clean. The Physics department never heard of him and he is not a member of the American Physical Society.

Bruce Fenton, who describes himself as "a British data scientist, adventurer and independent anthropologist," writes a far-out blog titled "Hybrid Humans—Extraterrestrial Genetic Engineering of *Homo sapiens* Alien-Human Hybrids." Last October 8, Fenton turned up something quite interesting:

Back in October 2017, Tom DeLonge was on the super popular Joe Rogan show, in what is widely considered a train-wreck of an interview (partly because Tom had to give various no-comment replies). During this conversation, Tom revealed that he would be putting out Bob Lazar's autobiography. Despite two years passing we have not heard anything more about that project, and yet, the book is now available on Amazon.

Fenton found that the publisher of the just-released *Dreamland: An Autobiography* by Bob Lazar was Interstellar Books. A check of the Whois record (a source for domain names and other information) for that publisher's website revealed that its registrant was "To The Stars, Inc." DeLonge had kept the promise he made on Joe Rogan's show, to publish Lazar's book! But that Whois record was soon changed to say "Domains by Proxy, LLC."

After this revelation raised a bit of a stink, suddenly on October 9 To The Stars abandoned its pretense of ignoring the Lazar autobiography, and for the first time acknowledged it, promoting it on their Twitter feed. "TTS is excited to announce the launch of our new imprint INTERSTELLAR, and its first book hitting bookshelves on Oct.15th, *Dreamland: An Autobiography by Bob Lazar*." They did warn that there are some of Lazar's claims in the book that "the TTS Academy team can't verify." Like Lazar's claim to be a physicist? Plenty of Lazar's claims can readily be un-verified, if TTSA would have bothered to check.

They still don't offer the Lazar book in To The Stars' retail store, or in their web store (<https://tothestars.media/>). Bruce Fenton had a fitting reply:

Let's not pretend you were excited to announce this book was published by TTSA and admit we all forced your hand (<https://bit.ly/2TvOgHo>). **S**