

myth of “rags to riches” or the American Dream. His story is not only a success story, though. His life was riddled with tragedy. His addiction and early death prompted by painkillers positions him as the popular celebrity who loses his stability, fame, and life to drugs. Perhaps his fluid and conflicted identities are the cause of his sustained popularity as an American icon. He is the shy southern star or the energetic rocker, the Christian gospel singer or the dangerous sex symbol, the figure of teenage rebellion or the drugged-out and bloated has-been. Elvis might not have faked his death to live as a recluse, but he lives on through these various images in the American imagination.

James M. Cochran

See also: Beatles, Deaths of The; Cobain, Kurt, Death of; Lee, Bruce, Death of; Monroe, Marilyn, Death of

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PROJECT BLUE BEAM

One of the most effective ways a conspiracy theory can gain notoriety is if its originator dies under suspicious circumstances. In 1996, the French Canadian journalist Serge Monast died of a heart attack. This was a mere two years after publishing his book *Project Blue Beam* (NASA), which claimed to expose the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) alleged plan to use advanced holographic technology to install a New World Order. Monast, along with another unidentified Canadian journalist, said he was given this information by an anonymous source. After publishing his book, Monast gave a number of interviews and talks on the topic, some of which have been reproduced online. His book is now out of print and incredibly difficult to find. Altogether, Monast's claims represent an effort to stitch together a grand conspiracy theory linking secret government operations, mind control, advanced technology, and millenarian religious belief.

Monast claimed after his 1994 publication that he was under surveillance by the government and was being threatened on a regular basis. On December 5, 1996, he was allegedly arrested and spent the night in jail. He died the following day. Those who believe in the Project Blue Beam conspiracy allege that the official version of his death by heart attack is, of course, false. Monast's death,

Projecting Allah

In 1999, a *Washington Post* article described a United States government psyops program that seemed to confirm the existence of the technology Monast described. During the Gulf War, the United States considered projecting the image of Allah in the skies over Iraq and using voice morphing technology to transmit the deity's voice, which would urge residents to overthrow Saddam Hussein. The program never received the necessary funding, but its existence has fueled speculation about Blue Beam ever since.

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they say, was instead the result of government intervention to stop the advance of his exposé. Monast's two children were placed in state care shortly before his death, apparently to provide them with a proper education, since Monast had been home-schooling them. This "abduction" of Monast's children has been cited as further evidence of the government's threatening actions toward the journalist.

In his book, Monast wrote that NASA was not the aeronautics and space administrative body of the U.S. government but was in fact a cabal intent on establishing a New World Order. NASA planned to do this by replacing all current belief systems with a single new religion with the Antichrist at its head. The plan would unfold in four steps. The first step would involve "the breakdown of all archaeological knowledge" (Monast 1994) through the orchestration of simulated earthquakes around the world. These earthquakes would reveal hoaxed physical evidence proving that the key tenets of religions like Christianity and Islam were in fact wrong.

The second step would comprise what Monast called a "big space show in the sky" that would use holographic and laser technology to project images and sounds throughout the world's skies. These projections would take the likeness of whatever deity was prominently worshipped in that part of the world. The holographic deities—whether "Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Krishna, etc." (Monast 1994)—would speak to their people in their own language and inform them of how exactly their religion had misled them, before merging into one single god (the Antichrist). This new god would tell the people that a new order was needed to resolve the world's problems.

Step three would continue the process by introducing what Monast called "Telepathic Electronic Two-Way Communication": telepathic messages beamed directly into the minds of believers, further reinforcing the Antichrist's appeal for a new order. Step four is composed of three phases, each of which would contribute to the goal of creating so much confusion and discord in the world that people would beg the Antichrist to restore order. The first phase of step four is the creation of belief that an alien invasion of every major city is about to occur, to force every country to launch its nuclear weapons in defense. The second phase is meant to

convince all Christians that the Rapture is about to happen, saving the righteous “from a savage and merciless demon” (Monast 1994). The third phase consists of using “a mixture of electronic and supernatural forces” that will travel through household appliances—such as TVs and microwaves, all of which apparently already contain secret microchips—in order to beam more messages of chaos to the world’s population. The goal is to create hysteria and madness, so that people will beg the Antichrist to save them. In short, NASA would deceive the world into believing that a “Second Coming” was imminent, in order to shoehorn into existence a new belief system that would form the foundation of a new political order.

Blue Beam was apparently supposed to be initiated in 1983, but to no avail. Another unsuccessful attempt was planned for 1996, the year of Monast’s death. Monast wrote that NASA had been preparing the technology necessary for such a large-scale operation for decades. Tests of the holographic projections in the sky were more commonly perceived as UFOs. Tests of the tractor beams that were meant to simulate people rising up into the heavens as part of the Rapture were more commonly witnessed as alien abductions. Indeed, even many Hollywood films were part of the plan. Movies like *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Jurassic Park* (1993), and *Independence Day* (1996) were all supposedly created to psychologically prepare the world for the coming change.

Skeptics of the conspiracy point to another popular science fiction production as the actual source of all of Monast’s claims. In the 1970s Gene Roddenberry, the creator of *Star Trek*, wrote a script for a feature film in the series that was never produced. The plot of the film involved a flying saucer that hovered above Earth, sending down people who looked like prophets. The idea was eventually repurposed for the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode “Devil’s Due” (1991), in which people from the planet Ventax II believe their world is coming to an end. This apocalypse is heralded by earthquakes and images of a figure in the sky who is able to transform herself into the likeness of any deity. In 1994, the writer Joel Engel published a biography of Roddenberry in which he recounted the story of the failed 1970s script. The important point about these productions is the timeline. The script, the TV episode, and Engel’s biography were all produced before Monast’s book. This is not direct proof that Monast derived his ideas from the earlier productions, but for many skeptics the coincidence is too striking to discount.

Matthew Hayes

See also: HAARP Research Program; Icke, David; New World Order

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PROJECT SILVER BUG

In 1953, the United States Air Force (USAF) worked closely and secretly with Avro-Canada, a Canadian aircraft manufacturing company, to construct a saucer-shaped, jet-propelled aircraft for military defense purposes in a program called Project Silver Bug. Also referred to as Project Y2, Project WS-606A, and Project 1794, Project Silver Bug was a joint military program for the research and development of vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) aircraft technologies. Researchers believed that these technologies would make possible the manufacture of circular "supersonic research aircraft" that would not require a runway when taking off and landing (ATIC 1955, iii). Although Project Silver Bug officially ended in 1961 due to its poor performance, some believe that the military actually created a vehicle capable of traveling at speeds of 2,300 miles per hour at an altitude of 80,000 feet, while others believe that its capabilities were even greater—perhaps even faster than the SR-71 Blackbird developed in 1966.

In 1953, during the early years of the Cold War, the American military was developing different technologies to prepare for a possible war with the Soviet Union. One of these technologies was an aircraft developed under the auspices of Project Silver Bug, the successor to a Canadian military-funded VTOL design headed by British aircraft designer John "Jack" Frost (1915–1979). Two years later, in 1955, the Air Force wrote a classified statement on the project's goals and methods, "Joint ATIC–WADC Report on Project Silver Bug," which was not made available to the public until 1996 under the Freedom of Information Act. The official report was written primarily to propose a second phase of development for the project and to determine "whether the Soviet Bloc is or has been conducting research efforts on a similar project" (ATIC 1955, iv). The researchers also wished to defend the project from the "inaccurate picture" painted by news outlets of "flying discs." According to the report, Project Silver Bug "should in no way be associated with any science fiction or 'Flying Saucer' stories because of its external appearance." Rather, the unique design and configuration "was a result of an engineering investigation into the solution of a particular problem" (iii). Despite the researchers' protests in the 1955 report, however, it is little wonder that people connected Project Silver Bug with science fiction and aliens. The familiar saucer-like shape of the aircraft, the project's secrecy, and Silver Bug's historical proximity both to the Roswell incident in 1947 and to the flood of unidentified flying object (UFO) sightings that followed throughout the 1950s all seem tailor-made to incite related conspiracy theories about UFO technologies and government cover-ups.