

ANNOUNCER: This is ABC News Nightline. Reporting from Washington, Ted Koppel.

KOPPEL: It is perhaps the ultimate 'what if.' What if the power of the human mind could be harnessed to track what cannot be seen or to discover what cannot be found by conventional means? What if it became possible to communicate mind-to-mind, regardless of distance and without employing any technology? And perhaps the most disconcerting 'what if' of all, what if the U.S. government dismissed all talk of parapsychology as nonsense, while the Soviet Union made a legitimate breakthrough in the field? It is that last 'what if,' according to three recent books, that has caused the Pentagon and the CIA to ever so discretely look into the subject. Here's Nightline correspondent James Walker.

WALKER: The arms race, the superpowers match missile for missile, tank for tank, plane for plane and now brain for brain. That's right. Some military observers and scientists believe that the United States and the Soviet Union are engaged in a psychic arms race, that both sides are training psychics to use their minds to conduct espionage and sabotage. How would it work? This 1952 memo from the CIA explains one military application. 'If a number of individuals could be found in the U.S. who have a very high ESP, extrasensory perception capacity, these talented individuals could be assigned to intelligence problems. Such a problem as whether or not the (word deleted) had a submarine pen at a given port or area could be attack by ESP.' ESP is part of the controversial field called parapsychology and includes such alleged abilities as telepathy--reading someone's mind, remote viewing--seeing things out of normal range of sight, precognition--predicting the future, and psychokinesis--moving objects with your mind. But many American scientists are highly skeptical. Dr. Paul Kurtz heads the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. DR. PAUL KURTZ (Skeptic): Are psychics able to discover where the submarines are? Can psychics use psychokinesis and stop incoming missiles or damage sensitive, ah, weaponry? That's all, at this point, pure speculation and pure fantasy.

WALKER: In 1960, one such fantasy alarmed the Soviets. This article in a French magazine claimed that the crew members of the U.S. nuclear submarine Nautilus had received telepathic messages from America as the sub cruised under the North Pole. The Soviets read the article. MARTIN EBON (Soviet Specialist): This material was picked up by Professor *Leonid Vaselea in Leningrad, who translated it, had it distributed among his colleagues and said, in effect, 'Look what these Americans are doing.'

WALKER: Martin Ebon, who is a Soviet specialist, says the article was a hoax, perhaps planted to fool the Soviets. It did spark their interest. Soviet scientists were allowed to study the strange powers of *Nina Kologana, who

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claimed to move objects without touching them, and the even stranger powers of *Karl Nikolaia, who said that he used the power of his brain to turn on a light bulb that was two yards away. More seriously, a laboratory was set up in western Siberia to study telepathy. Two American studies by the Defense Intelligence Agency that were recently declassified listed Soviet ambitions: to read top secret U.S. documents by means of remote viewing, to influence the thoughts of U.S. leaders, to cause at a distance instant death of U.S. officials, to disable at a distance U.S. military equipment. There is no evidence the Soviets can do any of that. But the studies concluded that Soviet knowledge in this field in the early 1970s was superior to that of the United States. That's about the time when the United States got more involved. HELLA HAMMID (Psychic): I've been having, for quite a while, an image of a very narrow light streak in the middle of a dark area.

WALKER: Hella Hammid was a psychic who took part in a series of remote viewing experiments similar to this one. She was asked to visualize the whereabouts of another person. HAMMID: Museum, like, ah....

WALKER: This time she was right. The person was, in fact, at a museum. Many such experiments involving Hammid and other psychics took place at a San Francisco company now called SRI International. And many were paid for by the U.S. Navy and the CIA. SRI officials say that 25 percent of their remote viewing tests produced very positive results. Russell Targ is a physicist who helped run the experiments for nine years. RUSSELL TARG (Parapsychologist): You would, you can't use remote viewing in general to get the combination of a lock. But you might get a pretty good description of what's hidden in the safe. The accuracy and reliability of psychic functioning and remote viewing, in particular, has gotten so good that a person might consider using it for something.

WALKER: For what, espionage? Targ won't say. But he and Hella Hammid say they were so concerned about the direction of the secret research at SRI that they left the company. HAMMID: I feel that this gift that we all have has not been given to us to destroy each other but to benefit each other and to create peace.

WALKER: A spokesman for the Pentagon says no money is currently being spent on psychic research. But he said he did not know about secret funding. North Carolina Congressman Charlie Rose, who has been an outspoken supporter of psychic research, now says he won't discuss it because, 'Most of what I have seen in this area has been classified.' KURTZ: Some people in this country are saying the, 'The Russians, the Russians, the Russians are coming. The Russians have discovered this.' Apparently some people in Russia are fearful of what we in the West have discovered.

WALKER: Kurtz believes that parapsychology is just so much magic. Nevertheless, he and many skeptics feel that psychic experiments such as this one should continue and that the U.S. government should fund psychic research just in case. This is James Walker for Nightline.

KOPPEL: When we return, we'll talk with a man who claims to have done psychic research for the Pentagon. We'll be joined by a researcher who's skeptical, but nonetheless warns against writing off the idea of psychic phenomena.

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KOPPEL: Russell Targ is an American author and student of psychic phenomena. He was invited to the Soviet Union last year as a guest of the Soviet Academy of Sciences to talk about the subject. Mr. Targ is in our San Francisco bureau. And at our affiliate WXYZ in Detroit is Dr. Marcello Truzzi, head of the sociology department at Eastern Michigan University. Dr. Truzzi has been a consultant to the Defense Department on psychic matters and is director of the Center for Psychic Anomalies Research. Mr. Targ, let me begin with you. I, first of all, I, I'm not terribly impressed by the fact that the Pentagon may or may not have spent money on this. I suspect that if someone said that the Russians, ah, had some believe in, in the defense of application of cauliflowers, we could get the Pentagon to spend half a million dollars on that. But what's your best shot? What is it when you talk to a group of skeptics, ah, that most causes them to put their skepticism aside? TARG: Our best shot is that the work at SRI in remote viewing has been replicated in many laboratories all across the United States and most recently even in the Soviet Union.

KOPPEL: Specifically. TARG: The work that we've been doing, the remote viewing research, involves a person sitting in the laboratory in California, often in a shielded enclosure, and asked to describe his or her experiences of what it looks like and what's going on at some distant location. In a series of experiments while I was in New York, for example, I was at Grant's Tomb, standing in front of the building. And a physicist at SRI was asked to draw his impressions of where I was. And he was able to make a sketch considerably close to what the building actually looked like. A few....

KOPPEL: And how often, how often is this kind of thing replicated? If you, if, in other words, you asked someone to do this, let's say 10 times, how many times would they come reasonably close? TARG: Six or seven times. We've done many series of six to nine trials. And we expect two-thirds of them to be correctly matched by independent judges. And this is the kind of accuracy that has been found in the other laboratories across the U.S. who have been able to replicate our work. If it just stood on work done at SRI, then it would be an anomaly. The fact that it's replicated at Mundelein College in Chicago, the Mind Science Foundation, Institute for Parapsychology and now the Academy of Science in Soviet Armenia, I think the existence of the phenomenon is shown to be very robust. In our experience, even government scientists can do remote viewing successfully.

KOPPEL: Dr. Truzzi, ah, if we put this in a, in a less extraordinary kind of context, if we say are there some people who have a sensitivity, who can sense one another's moods just by walking into a room and seeing someone across the room--no question about it, of course your can. Ah, but do you believe that it is possible for a person sitting a thousand miles away to be able to describe accurately to you where someone else is? TRUZZI: Not certainly in the sense that, ah, Mr. Targ has remarked about. Ah, I don't believe that the replication rate is nearly as high as he has indicated. I think that he neglects many failures to replicate. More important, I know of no critic's studies of remote viewing which have produced the results. And finally, ah, the replication rate that he claims has varied. In the book 'Mind Reach,' by Targ and *Putov, they claimed ubiquitous results. They claimed that they never had failures in runs.

KOPPEL: Well, I mean... TRUZZI: Now it's only two-thirds.

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KOPPEL: ...I'll, it missed it a third. TRUZZI: So I don't know.

KOPPEL: Mister, yeah, Mr. Targ was just saying, what, six, seven times out of 10? Uh, you... TRUZZI: Well, that's two-thirds. But the point is, they claimed this incredible, uh, 100-percent result earlier. Now they've moved it down, uh, and I think that the data would not support that degree of replication. Nonetheless, there is replication. There are, there is what I would call a true scientific anomaly taking place in this work, and I would certainly encourage more research, particularly research by skeptics.

KOPPEL: What does that mean when you, when you speak of scientific anomaly here? TRUZZI: Well, in other words, they're getting results which manifestly seem to contradict our normal scientific expectations. We wouldn't expect people to score the way they seem to score in these reports. Uh, nonetheless, those studies which have been carefully examined by critics seem to reveal methodological flaws which weaken substantially the evidential character of the claim. In other words, there are possibilities of error in the studies, uh, that critics have noted. So I would argue, in other words, that there is indeed evidence, but the evidence is far weaker than Mr. Targ and many proponents would claim.

KOPPEL: All right, gentlemen. On that opening burst, let's take a break, and then we'll come back. We'll be back with more of our discussion in just a moment.

KOPPEL: Joining us again now from San Francisco, Russell Targ, and from Detroit, Dr. Marcello Truzzi. Dr. Truzzi, let's approach this from the positive point of view. If, 75 years ago, you and I had been sitting around and I had said to you, 'Some day, people by the millions are gonna be sitting in their homes and they will see you sitting in Detroit and they'll see another man sitting in San Francisco, and they'll be able to listen and watch as the three of us have a discussion,' we would've said, 'Ridiculous,' would've pooh-poohed it. Why isn't it just as likely that there is a breakthrough here that can be made that will ultimately enable us to communicate by telepathy with one another? TRUZZI: Well, I think it is absolutely essential that we support research into anomalies. I am the director of a center for scientific anomalies research, after all. And I do believe that we have to look for the positive and constructive side of these things. And clearly, we do know that future science will hold surprises, and things that are today considered controversial will eventually, some of 'em, become accepted. But we still also know that most anomaly claims are dead ends, most anomaly things, you know, were rightly pooh-poohed. We did laugh at a lot of things that turned out to be laughable.

KOPPEL: All right. What's the most extraordinary phenomenon in this area that you've come across that you have not been able to explain away? TRUZZI: Well, I think, in general, the reasonably high replication levels that are present in remote viewing studies, in the Ganzfeld studies and in the PK, micro-PK, that is, the microscopic mind-over-matter experiments, would seem to be the strongest, uh, pieces of work...

KOPPEL: What are the Ganzfeld experiments? TRUZZI: The Ganzfeld work concerns altered states of consciousness. The Ganzfeld technique is essentially putting a white field in front of a person's eyes and sort of lulling them into a very tranquil state--dreamlike state, in some ways--and, uh, getting transmissions.

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But we also have to remember that when we talk about work in parapsychology, the Soviet Union and the United States have two very different ideas of what constitutes parapsychology. Much of the work that the Russians do is very physicalist, very mechanistic in its approach, which includes things like extreme low-frequency radio waves and electromagnetic ideas, which most American parapsychologists would see outside of psy (sic) research. They would see that as too materialistic. TARG: Well, American physicists who are studying psychic abilities are very interested in the mechanisms. My interest in psychic functioning came as a physicist to try and explain and design repeatable experiments so that we could make a rapprochement between what we see in the laboratory in psychic experiments and what we understand about modern physics. The Soviets really share that interest, although the Soviets are much more involved in applications of psychic abilities.

KOPPEL: Let me ask you, Mr. Targ, for example, Uri Geller, a man who bends keys or bends spoons, he would allege, by, by psychic ability. Do you believe that? TARG: We wouldn't say so. When Geller was at SRI, we found that he had psychic abilities to describe hidden things, just as quite a number of other people are able to do. When Marcello says that we claim 100 percent success...

KOPPEL: Even 60 percent. TARG: Well, we, we, what we have said is that most people are able to do remote viewing. In our book, 'The Mind Race,' we give examples of how a person can learn to do that.

KOPPEL: Well, tell us, I mean, you, you, you've got five or six million people watching you right now. Tell them... TARG: Yes.

KOPPEL: ...how they could engage in this kind of thing. What do you mean by that? TARG: Well, we invite a person to relax and close his eyes and describe his or her mental pictures with regard to where a distant person is hiding. We say, 'Don't guess at the name of the place, just describe your impressions, your experiences, what you're feeling and what you're seeing, and your remote viewing will give you the correct answer.'

KOPPEL: Now, what's the application of all of this? I mean, we're, we're, we began by speaking of, of some kind of a, almost a psychic arms race here. Is there any real application to this? TARG: There're many applications. When we talked to the Soviet Academy of Sciences, their interest was in the fact that it's possible for an experienced viewer to focus his attention to anyplace on the planet, and it was evident to everybody in their physics, in their physics community and their psychology community that it's not possible to hide anything anymore, if viewers can... TRUZZI: Why, I would have to... TARG: ...if viewers describe where it is. TRUZZI: ...take strong exception to what Mr. Targ said, when he said everyone in the physics and psychological community. Uh, I think it is very clear... TARG: I said all the people we were talking to in the So... We were invited by the Academy of Sciences to talk about remote viewing, and the people... TRUZZI: Well, I'm sure you had a very unrepresentative and certainly self-selected population of persons. And you know, certainly, the position of Soviet psychology in general is very much like American psychology in general: highly opposed, uh, on theoretical grounds, in fact, largely. TARG: Well, I would say the difference between the American scientific community and the Soviet is that at the highest levels in the Soviet scientific community, psychic research is taken seriously and there's no doubt about it.

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KOPPEL: And you claim in, in this country it is not? TARG: I would say in this country, it's not, because people are worried about the so-called giggle potential. Now viewers and scientists and people outside the government are interested in psychic experiences not because they read about them, but because they're having them.

KOPPEL: Well, everybody I think, suspects, look, my mother was the kind of person who said, you know, 'Something's gonna... I had this feeling something's gonna be terribly wrong today,' and 99 times out of 100 she was wrong, but she would remember that one time when she was right. We're all like that a little bit, aren't we? Is that a psychic experience? TARG: Right. Scientists call that data selection. We're not talking about the anecdotal experiences, we're talking about... TRUZZI: But you've largely offered us anecdotal information in the examples that you've given. We still need to have the kind of quantitative data which, to some degree, you have provided, but which is really not nearly so impressive as single qualitative cases such as, you know, you've shown in films and, uh, recently on the Nova program and elsewhere.

KOPPEL: Forgive me. We're down to our last 30 seconds. Mr. Targ, what, what is being done to offer the kind of quantitative data that, that, that really would, if not silence the skeptics, at least cause them to draw breath? TARG: The most quantitative experiment we did is to use remote viewing to forecast changes in the silver commodity market, where the little company we formed, Delphi Associates, made nine consecutive correct calls on the magnitude and direction for the change in silver. No one could've whispered in our ear what was going to happen.