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Government Still Involved in ESP-ionage

A decade ago, an American agent penetrated a previously unknown, top-secret Soviet military base in the Urals. The spy described the base in minute detail, according to a Central Intelligence Agency report.

He charted railways, machine shops and laboratories. He even reported that "an unusual proportion of women" were working at the facility.

James Bond should be so successful. Unlike his fictional counterpart, this agent was not particularly bold or dashing. He didn't parachute deep into Soviet territory or even slip across the Iron Curtain under cover of darkness.

In fact, America's agent was Patrick Price, a bulky, balding ex-police commissioner from Burbank, Calif.—the spawning grounds of some of Hollywood's most successful spy movies. During the entire mission, he never left the comfort of the Stanford Research Institute laboratory in Menlo Park, Calif.

Price, who has since died, was a self-proclaimed psychic. His amazing "mission" was part of a series of tests sponsored by the CIA. The purpose was to determine if people who claim unusual powers of telepathy could describe scenes in faraway places.

Before dismissing this as hallucinogenic hokum, the taxpayers should know that our government has spent—and continues to spend—millions of dollars on this hush-hush research. It began with the CIA's "Project Scanate" in the early 1970s, and has become the Defense Intelligence Agency's "Project Grill Flame."

But the same Stanford Research Institute physicist has been in charge all these years: former

National Security Agency employe Harold Puthoff. The government uses Puthoff as the Santa Claus for psychic research; funds are channeled through him to other research institutes.

Puthoff refuses to speak about the project. And Stanford Research Institute's doors have rarely been opened to invite skeptical examiners into the secret sanctums. But several sources close to the mind-expanding study claim solid successes.

The most striking occurred when one of the institute's top psychics, given only the geographical coordinates, described the Semipalatinsk nuclear facility in Soviet Central Asia in detail that was only confirmed afterward by satellite spy photos. The psychic also described equipment resembling accelerators and electron injectors kept in an underground cavern at the facility, which has since been reported as a "directed energy" facility.

The CIA smelled fraud, though, when he talked about giant steel spheres at the location that, they knew, could not possibly stand the stress associated with laser and particle-beam research.

Once again, in the years that followed, the CIA found to its chagrin that the psychic was right: The Soviets had developed a process of "flux welding," which could hold the spheres together during the military research.

Is all this ESP-ionage a boondoggle, or has the government-sponsored team stumbled on to something?

The stamp of secrecy keeps us from knowing for sure. Unless, of course, we choose to sit back in a chair, close our eyes, and imagine ourselves into the privacy of Grill Flame Central.