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JACK ANDERSON

'Voodoo Gap' Looms as Latest Weapons Crisis

I have reported previously on secret projects to adapt psychic phenomena to military purposes. For example, in laboratory experiments, psychics have been used to spy on the Soviets by projecting their minds outside their bodies.

One psychic was able to describe a secret Soviet base in astonishing detail that was later confirmed by satellite photographs. Another located a Soviet Tu95 "Backfire" bomber that had crashed in Africa.

U.S. Navy and Air Force chiefs are skeptical about these experiments, which they describe scornfully as "witchcraft" and "black magic." But the Army's intelligence chief, Lt. Gen. William Odom, has been impressed with some of the results.

Odom is worried about intelligence reports that the Soviets are far ahead in psychic research. Inside the Pentagon, he has raised the question of whether the Soviets could use psychics to penetrate our secret vaults. This has led to talk in the backrooms about raising a "psychic shield" to block this sort of remote spying.

The CIA also is taking psychic research seriously. Former CIA director Stanfield Turner told critics that their skepticism about the CIA's psychic projects was "healthy" but that the research should keep pace with their skepticism.

The most impressive research in this area has been conducted by Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ, both respected academics with the Stanford Research Institute in Menlo Park, Calif. Puthoff is still with the institute; Targ left two years ago to form his own company, Delphi Associates. They began their experiments in the early 1970s, using psychics to describe scenes at specific coordinates on the globe. The project, partly funded by the Defense Department and the CIA, was called "Scanate" for "scan by coordinate."

Their latest project, code-named "Grill Flame," produced some amazing results. Psychics described the contents of locked filing cabinets; they mentally breached the security of secret military installations.

Earlier, they had discovered the rings around Jupiter years before their existence was scientifically established by photographs.

Despite these impressive achievements, sources told my associates Dale Van Atta and Joseph Spear that the psychics' success rate is only about 70 percent. For example, psychics who were asked by the Penta-

gon to pinpoint the place where Italian Red Brigade terrorists were holding Brig. Gen. James Dozier prisoner in January, 1982, did not come close.

But the occasional successes encourage intelligence officials to keep trying in hopes of giving remote spying more respectability. They also are concerned about the Soviets who are known to have spent many more years and far more money on parapsychological research.

At the risk of being ridiculed over a "voodoo gap," advocates like Rep. Charlie Rose (D-N.C.), support continued research into the more promising areas of this mysterious field. After all, the atomic bomb was once thought to be a harebrained idea. It's safe to say that many things considered utterly fantastic today will be accepted as commonplace by the end of the century.

Backfire of the Week: The federal government's massive giveaway of cheese not only was supposed to feed the hungry but also to cut down on surplus cheese stocks in government warehouses. It seems the giveaway allowed some consumers to stop buying cheese at the supermarket. So the government's stockpile of surplus cheese has grown from 619 million pounds in 1981 to 1 billion pounds last year. The cost of the government's purchase of surplus cheese and butter went from \$1.3 billion in 1979 to \$2.8 billion in 1983.