

Johnson White House and the New York City Blackout

Written by Grant Cameron

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At 5:16 PM. November 9, 1965 the Great Northeast Power Blackout occurred. The commonly told story is that the failure began at the Ontario - New York border, near Niagara Falls (Sir Adam Beck No.2 Generating Station at Queenston, Ontario).

Supposedly a transmission line at the Niagara generating station failed and within seconds five other transmission lines became overloaded and tripped. At this point generators began shutting down and the entire the northeast power system became unstable and separated into isolated power systems. Within five seconds 30 million people were in the dark. It took up to

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thirteen hours to get the power back up.

There was a lot of evidence that showed UFO sightings being reported in connection with the New York City Blackout. In addition to the reported sightings prior to and during the blackout, there were reports that indicated the UFOs might actually have caused the blackout. If true this would have support from other historic UFO cases that indicated that electromagnetic effects from UFOs could cause power outages.

Even the news York Times covered the story of the sightings, and even published a photo with an apparent UFO in its publication of November 19.

Evidence looking at the possible UFO – New York City blackout connection was even brought in front of congress. Dr. James E. McDonald, a top Ufologist of the day and University of Arizona professor, testified on the possible UFO connection to the northeast blackout in front of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics at July 29, 1968, Symposium on Unidentified Flying Objects, Rayburn Bldg., Washington, D.C. Among the congressmen who listened in was the present Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

The congressmen were impressed enough with the evidence that they questioned Dr. McDonald on his theory of UFO electromagnetic effects being able to black out huge sections of the country. One exchange occurred with Representative William F. Ryan, a Democrat from New York City.

Mr. Ryan: *Let me ask a further question: In the course of your investigation and your study of UFO sightings, have you found any cases where contemporaneously with the sighting of UFO's allegedly, there were any other events which took place, which might or might not be related to the UFO's?*

Dr. McDonald: *Yes. Certainly there are many physical effects. For instance, in Mr. Pettis' district, several people found the fillings in their mouth hurting while this object was nearby, but there are many cases probably on record of car ignition failure. One famous case was at Levelland, Tex., in 1957. Ten vehicles were stopped within a short area, all independently in a 2-hour period, near Levelland, Tex. There was no lightning or thunder storm, and only a trace of rain.*

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There is another, which I don't know whether to bring to the committee's attention or not. The evidence is not as conclusive as the car stopping phenomenon, but there are too many instances for me to ignore. UFO's have often been seen hovering near power facilities. There are a small number but still a little too many to seem pure fortuitous chance, of system outages, coincident with the UFO sighting. One of the cases was Tamaroa, Ill. Another was a case in Shelbyville, Ky., early last year.

"Then there are scattered instances in which substantial power distribution systems have failed at or very near the time of observation of aerial phenomena similar, broadly speaking, to one or another UFO phenomenon. I have personally checked on several such instances and am satisfied that the coincidence of UFO observation and power outage did at least occur. Whether there is a causal connection here, and in which direction it may run, remains quite uncertain. Even during the large Northeast blackout, November 9, 1965, there were many UFO observations, several of which I have personally checked..."

"I interviewed a woman in Seacliff, N.Y. She saw a disk hovering and going up and down. And then shooting away from New York just after the power failure. I went to the FPC for data, they didn't take them seriously although they had many dozens of sighting reports for that famous evening. There were reports all over New England in the midst of that blackout, and five witnesses near Syracuse, N.Y., saw a glowing object ascending within about a minute of the blackout. First they thought it was a dump burning right at the moment the lights went out. It is rather puzzling that the pulse of current that tripped the relay at the Ontario Hydro Commission plant has never been identified, but initially the tentative suspicion was centered on the Clay Substation of the Niagara Mohawk network right there in the Syracuse area, where unidentified aerial phenomenon has been seen by some of the witnesses."

This extends down to the limit of single houses losing their power when a UFO is near. The hypothesis in the case of car stopping is that there might be high magnetic fields, d.c. fields, which saturate the [ignition system solenoid] core and thus prevent the pulses going through the system to the other side. Just how a UFO could trigger an outage on a large power network is however not yet clear. But this is a disturbing series of coincidences that I think warrant much more attention than they have so far received.

Mr. Ryan: As far as you know, has any agency investigated the New York blackout in relation to UFO?

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Dr. McDonald: *None at all. when I spoke to the FPC people, I was dissatisfied with the amount of information I could gain. I am saying there is a puzzling and slightly disturbing coincidence here. I'm not going on record as saying, yes, these are clear-cut cause and effect relations. I'm saying it ought to be looked at. There is no one looking at this relation between UFO's and outages.*

President Johnson at the time of the blackout was at his Texas ranch recovering from an operation to remove his gall bladder and a kidney stone. Johnson heard of the blackout while driving in his limousine some miles from the ranch on the car radio. His first reaction was to phone Buford Ellington. His second call was to Robert McNamara, his Secretary of Defense.

According to the New York Times, from 6:00pm till he went to bed at 1:00pm Johnson was on the phone every five to ten minutes with his Buford Ellington, the Director of the Office of Emergency Planning.

Buford Ellington's organization was responsible for major national emergencies such as blackouts, sabotage, nuclear attack, and the like. The man under Ellington whose job it was to deal with the blackout, and figure out what had caused it was J. Leo Bourassa. He was the same man who exactly one month later would appear in the Blue Book file dealing with the crash at Kecksburg Pennsylvania.

According to the records at the Johnson library, Bourassa, using a direct to the Joint Chiefs of Staff Command Center, did direct the blackout emergency from his bunker at Mount Weather. A couple weeks after the event, he wrote his final report to Ellington about what had caused the blackout. The letter hinted at the possible role of UFOs.

From the November 23, 1965 Bourassa report on the blackout we read,

"The lack of specific information at the time, plus the state of confusion that existed in the Northeast U.S., the fact that sabotage, enemy action, and unknown phenomena were all considered possibilities..."

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"Had there been any of the above possibilities proven an ATLAS condition would have been recommended," Bourassa wrote.

Although the Pentagon was reporting nothing had been seriously affected, there were facts that showed this was not true. There was secret information that indicated that the situation was much more complex than just a power blackout.

Only a couple days after the blackout a book called "Strike From Space" appeared in the bookstores. Conservative activists Phyllis Schlafly and Rear Admiral Chester Ward (Ret) authored the book. Although it dealt mostly with the growing threat of Soviet space weapons and the Johnson White House's inability to deal with the problem, the book did describe some serious events that were never really made public.

Schlafly and Ward relied on the counsel of a cast of military advisors for their book. Some of those names that included some names that have become very prominent in the UFO community. One was General Cutis LeMay who told Senator Barry Goldwater that not only could he not see the rumored Blue Room at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, but he should never even ask about it again. The second key advisor to the book was Hoover Institution strategic theorist Dr Stefan Possony, who had been attendee at the 1953 CIA UFO Scientific Advisory Panel meetings.

The book claimed that not only had the lights gone out all over the eastern United States, in an underground command post called High Point, near Berryville, Virginia, Air Force Colonel J Leo Bourassa was picking up nuclear alerts from a national network of nuclear blast detection devices called System 210-A, or "Bomb Alarm." < <http://www.ufx.org/fobs/bombalarm.html> >

One recounting of the incident recounted,

"The Bomb Alarm display board at High Point was blazing with yellow lights, indicating that communications links to the BMEWS site in Thule, Greenland, as well as twenty-one other System 210-A sites, had gone down. But worse – much worse – two of the sensors, the ones for Salt Lake City and Charlotte, North Carolina, were showing red. Red for nuclear detonations.

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Bourassa assumed the worst – that a surgical nuclear attack was under way – and placed Mt Weather on full alert. It was the one and only time that the facility went on alert during the Cold War."

Bourassa called the full alert and called it off a couple days later. It was probably the type of action that he liked, in light of the fact that in November 1954 Bourassa quit his government job "because of not enough work to do."

Exactly one month later he would be busy again. This time it would involve the possible recovery of an object in Kecksburg Pennsylvania.