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# STORM IN A BEE CUP

## John “Bee Man” Triggs vs John “Nature Bee” Banks



The Nature Bee “bee”

IAN WISHART reports on a commercial scrap that makes telecom and clear look trivial

**T**urn on the radio these days, particularly talkback, and you could be forgiven for thinking the whole country has gone to the bees. We’re talking pollen. Truckloads of the stuff, flying out of warehouses around the country so fast that even the bees can’t keep up.

If you thought varroa mite was going to devastate New Zealand’s apiarists, you wouldn’t know it from listening to the millions of dollars that has been spent advertising bee products.

But the people spending millions marketing bee pollen knew their advertising was an investment: what goes around buzzes around.

And as Winnie the Pooh once said, “where there’s bees, there’s munny, and where there’s munny there’s lawyers”.

And if you want to know why lawyers are involved, you need look no further than the venomous barbs flying between members of the scientific community:

“Dear Dr Duncan,” writes Professor Maria Campos, “Usually I don’t waste my time answering ill-informed provocation such as you have directed at me, but too much is too much and for the good name of science...”

Or this from the said Dr Duncan: “Dear Mr Triggs, you do defame me...”

Ouch!

So why so much sting in one of the most heavily promoted health supplements in the country?

When Auckland businessman John Triggs first took to the radio airwaves back in 1995 pushing the health advantages of bee pollen capsules, little did he know the Pandora’s Hive he was about to unleash.

He called himself “The Bee Pollen Man”, and folk dialled in from near and far on his nationwide 0800 number to purchase his bee pollen capsules. 50,000 folk, in fact.

But little did Triggs know that the man who initially helped him promote the product on nationwide radio would end up his arch-rival and co-owner of another bee pollen provider.

That man was John Banks, National MP for Whangarei

and a radio talkback host. “Banksie came to see me one morning,” says Triggs. “and told me they had a great marketing strategy for my bee pollen, and I signed up for thousands of dollars worth of advertising.

“So imagine my shock when a few weeks later as my campaign was in full swing, I suddenly hear a rival company advertising right after me, bagging my bee pollen!”

That company was Nature Bee, owned, at the time by brothers Jeff and Benjamin Cook. Their product, they told listeners, wasn’t ordinary pollen. It was “potentiated bee pollen, 80 times more effective” than common or garden bee pollen. Naturally, consumers out there in worker bee land kept the phone lines at Nature Bee buzzing as they purchased vast amounts of potentiated bee pollen.

Over at Jeff Triggs’ Abeeco, things no longer seemed quite so rosy.

At the centre of this scrap between two major pollen suppliers is a trademarked word: potentiation.

What does it mean? Well, that depends on who you talk to. Dr Kelvin Duncan is Dean of Science at Canterbury University. He’s the person who invented potentiation, which involves smashing the pollen grains so as to allegedly release nutrients not otherwise “bioavailable”.

Duncan’s company, Cellular Improvements Ltd, now supplies its potentiation technology to Nature Bee and other pollen companies around the world.

The potentiated pollen has been marketed as 80 times more digestible than ordinary pollen, a euphemism for 80 times more potent.

Which is all very well, but a growing number of scientists are now asking the obvious question: where’s the proof? While the marketing advantage for potentiated pollen is clear, what is the health advantage? Does potentiated pollen create customers with 80 times more buzz?

The claimed benefits of the potentiation process were enough to earn Nature Bee’s parent company, Topline International, the 1998 Supreme Award from the grandly titled International Nutrition Association in America. In

faxing a copy of the award certificate through to a grumbling Abeeco, Nature Bee's solicitor wrote: "...a copy of the NAC award certificate follows. I trust that this information will allay any concerns that your client may have."

There's nothing investigators like more than a challenge. So we picked up the gauntlet. The phone number for the International Nutrition Association goes to a doctor's general clinic, and the organisation appears to have no internet webpage.

On further investigation, the award emanates from Nature Bee's US agent, a little company named NAC Vitamins operating out of an office suite in New York, which just happens to sell bee pollen.

The Supreme Award displayed so grandly on the Nature Bee website's opening page? It appears to be little more than an advertising gimmick.

There is no evidence, in the internet searches we've done, that the award has any merit: none of the other companies that have allegedly received this auspicious gong are boasting about it on their websites.

In fact, when we did a search for "NAC Supreme Award", the only websites that came up out of 1.4 billion surveyed by Google.com were two Nature Bee ones.

Taken another way, Nature Bee appears to be the only company in the world boasting about winning a NAC "award".

So it is little wonder that scientists like Toxic Substances Board founder and Government poisons advisor Robert Mann are scorning Nature Bee's "potentiation" claims as well.

"My concerns are three," Mann was quoted in testimony to the Advertising Standards Authority. "Any claim to multiply the benefits of pollen by the huge factor of 80-fold is implausible. Where are the measurements on which it could be based?"

"After the 'potentiation' process, what is the stability of the good chemicals in the pollen - do they then have a



Dr Duncan's photos allegedly showing potentiation process works. Other scientists claim different species of pollen were compared, making the photos worthless for comparative purposes



pollen is 90% bioavailable.

But as Abeeco successfully pointed out, multiplying Topline's own figures meant that 'potentiation' was, at best, only 30 to 2.5 times more "bioavailable", not 80 times.

But even if it is more "bioavailable", what does that mean? Is what is inside the hard cell wall of the pollen any more nutritionally important than the vital amino acids and "free radical gobbling" elements that live on the outside of the pollen grain and are therefore enjoyed by all?

Even that question remains up in the air.

The war of words at this level is fought between scientists. Dr Kelvin Duncan, who has a financial interest in the potentiation process he invented, is a zoologist. Dr Maria Campos, a Portuguese scientist specialising in pharmaceutical research, has spent 14 years investigating the health benefits of bee pollen.

Duncan gatecrashed an Auckland health seminar organised by bee pollen company Comvita where Campos



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normal shelf life? And if they break down, are the resulting products toxic?

"Testing on animals will be required to settle this last concern. Until these concerns are settled by facts, this 'potentiated' pollen should in my opinion not be permitted for human consumption."

In some respects, Topline/Nature Bee hung themselves out to dry with what appeared to be conflicting statements. The company on the one hand claimed that between 3 and 38% of natural bee pollen was digested by humans and therefore bioavailable. It states its own 'potentiated'

was speaking in December 1999, taking Campos to task. Campos fired back a ten page letter spelling out some very impressive credentials in the pollen research field and leaving Duncan aware in no uncertain terms exactly what she thought of his research.

"I enclose a short abstract of my PhD thesis and 21 published papers in the highest scientific journals, and 20 scientific presentations at scientific meetings around the world. Unfortunately I can't read yours," she concluded, "(they didn't exist!)"

Campos, having reviewed the international studies and

“

John Banks knew a good thing when he saw it, though. Documents filed at the Companies Office indicate that the Banks family had a financial stake in the Cook brothers' business empire from early February 1999

”

carried out her own, is firmly of the belief that all of the amino acids are digestible in ordinary bee pollen, along with all of the free sugars, minerals, flavonoids and fat, while half of the proteins are digestible and 26% of the insoluble carbohydrates.

Duncan, for his part, felt that extensive clinical tests on humans were unnecessary, and in a letter added: "I am unaware of any clinical trials conducted by Mr Triggs or his agents that prove his product is beneficial for human health."

"Any evidence that Mr Triggs gathers or commissions in an attempt to show my process does not work will have to be set against the physical evidence we have showing that the process does work," he stated, perhaps foreshadowing the Advertising ruling on the matter.

Whilst it is logical and easily understood by consumers that cracking the cell wall of the pollen will allow whatever is inside to be easily digested as well, it would be simplistic to equate availability with goodness. The goodness in an apricot, for example, lies in the fruit outside the hard seed core. The inside of the core is poisonous.

Which isn't to say that "potentiated" bee pollen is dangerous, because obviously a portion of natural pollen will have broken cores as well. But no tests appear to have been done as yet on what happens to the nutrients inside broken pollen. Do they "go off" after contact with air, for example?

Nobody knows the answers to these kinds of questions because the tests just haven't been done. Which is where the Advertising Standards Authority come in.

Abeeco and Comvita laid complaints with the ASA alleging breaches of the advertising codes, particularly the sections relating to therapeutic claims.

After hearing the evidence, the ASA ruled in favour of Nature Bee on one item: that the evidence did show that "potentiation" makes the pollen more digestible.

However, on the key points, Nature Bee lost. The ASA said that the claim that Nature Bee potentiated bee pol-

len was "90% available to your body" was not borne out by the evidence provided to it.

"In the Panel's opinion, there was no evidence of substantiation, which correlated bioavailability and digestibility."

And ruling on Nature Bee's claim that "It's potentiated...which means it's up to 80 times more digestible than other bee pollens", the ASA again held that the claim was not substantiated by the evidence.

It may be that Dr Duncan is correct in his belief that potentiation works, but he hasn't been able to satisfy the Advertising Standards Authority yet that it provides any extra benefits above ordinary bee pollen.

As for Triggs' complaint, Nature Bee director John Banks was dismissive when questioned by the *Sunday Star Times*: "I see this man as just nothing more or less than an aggrieved competitor and I don't give those sort of people mind time."

John Banks knew a good thing when he saw it, though. Documents filed at the Companies Office indicate that the Banks family had a financial stake in the Cook brothers' business empire from early February 1999, when Amanda Banks took a one-quarter shareholding in a company called Radio Marketing Group Ltd co-owned by the Cooks. In December 2000, John Banks purchased half of Nature Bee from the Cooks, and in May 2001 he and fellow shareholder Ben Cook awarded themselves \$2.25 million worth of extra shares, each.

At least somebody's making munny in the bee biz.

Disclosures of interest: Ian Wishart is a talkback host at Radio Pacific. *Investigate* magazine has sold advertising space in this issue to Abeeco. This story was carried on its merits, and is coincidental (and possibly inimical) to the above points.



# KAVANAGH'S WAR

# 2



kiwi photojournalist **shayne kavanagh** has just filed these pictures from the **palestine war zone**







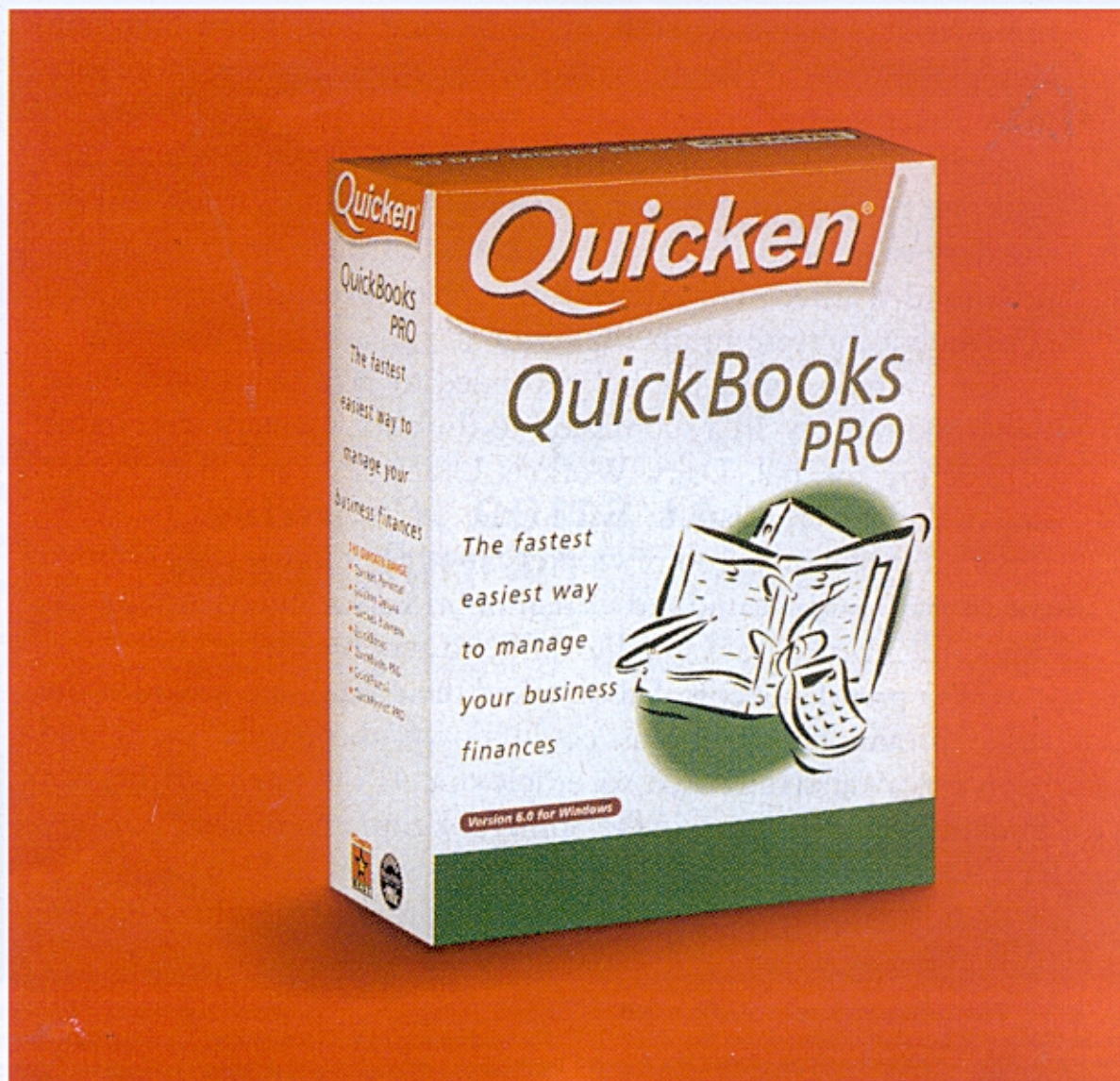








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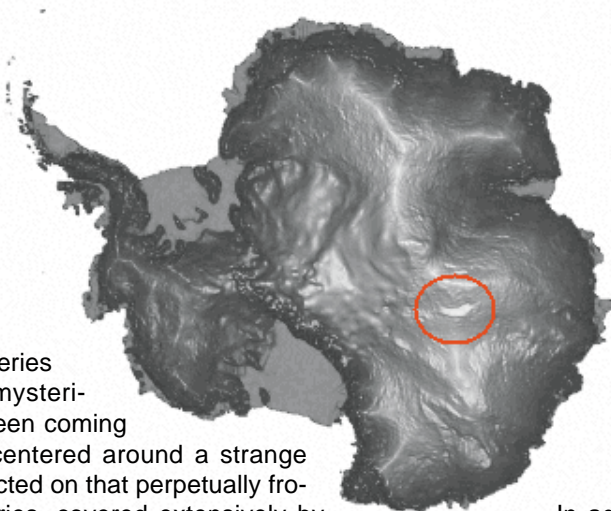
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# ANTARCTIC X-FILES

## 2001: an ice oddity - antarctic conspiracy hits the internet

RICHARD  
HOAGLAND  
and MICHAEL  
BARA ponder  
things that go  
bump on the ice



In recent weeks, a series of disturbing and mysterious reports have been coming out of Antarctica, centered around a strange “anomaly” recently detected on that perpetually frozen Continent. The stories, covered extensively by internet news sources (like Kent Steadman’s Cyberspace Orbit site), draw eerie parallels to material as diverse as a French novel, the *X-Files* movie, and as we shall see, even Arthur C. Clarke’s *2001 - A Space Odyssey*.

All the intrigue centers around a fairly recent, but potentially “breakthrough” discovery on that icy Continent. In 1957, the Russians built a base in eastern Antarctica which they named “Vostok” (East), which also happens to be the name of the first series of manned Russian spacecraft. In the 1970’s, via airborne radar surveys, they belatedly began to suspect that they had “inadvertently” (as the story goes) built their base at the tip of a large subglacial lake. In the years since, orbital radar mapping (shown below) combined with surface seismological measurements have confirmed that “Lake Vostok,” under over two miles of solid ice, is the largest lake discovered in the last 100 years — roughly the size of Lake Ontario but much deeper in places (more than 3000 feet!), with about four times the volume.

The Lake, which is still liquid and not frozen, has been isolated under the ice sheet since anywhere from 13,000 to 14 million years ago, depending on who you talk to (thus, who’s estimating precisely “when” the ice last completely covered the Continent). The water in the Lake (determined by surface thermal scans) ranges from 13 to 18 degrees C, clearly indicating a subterranean heat source.

In addition, the whole Lake is covered by a sloping air “dome” several thousand feet high that has formed (from the “hot” water melting the overlying ice) just above the Lake’s surface. Core samples taken by the Russians a couple years ago at their Vostok Base -- when they drilled down very close to the bottom of the ice sheet — have revealed the presence of microbes, nutrients and various gases — like methane — embedded in the clear, refrozen Lake water just above the “dome.” Such items are typical signatures of biological processes. The Lake, therefore, has all the ingredients of an incredible scientific find: a completely “isolated” eco-system — water, heat, respired gases and (judging from the unique micro-organisms that scientists were actually able to culture in the United States and Russia, when retrieved from their icy prison) ... current biological activity. As the actual scope and composition of the Lake became clearer from about 1998 on, NASA began to see it as an ideal test bed for its eventual plans to drill through the ice and search the oceans of Jupiter’s moon, Europa.

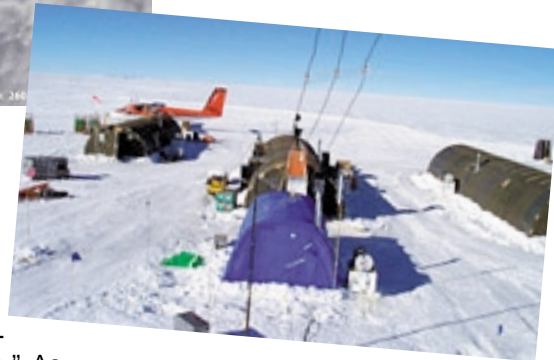
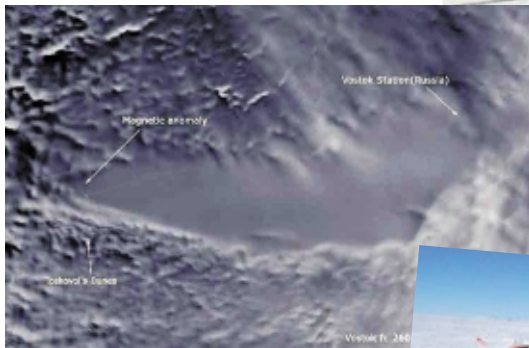
Accordingly, JPL received NASA grants to develop unique “sterile” drilling technology, conduct actually drilling and probe experiments in other terrestrial environments, and to prepare a Plan to actually enter Lake Vostok by 2002.

But, coincident with a stunning new discovery, JPL has evidently now backed off these ambitious exploration





**A job for Mulder & Scully? RIGHT: A US Hercules en route to Lake Vostok, BELOW, and the US research station there, BOTTOM**



plans. According to *Scientific American*, the National Science Foundation has now suddenly cancelled plans to penetrate the Lake with a robotic probe by that target date: 2002. The ostensible reason is “concern over environmental contamination.” As noted earlier, core samples returned from the ice refrozen just 100 yards above the Lake’s “air dome,” contained a plethora of microorganisms of various categories, including some never seen before.

These new, exotic life forms have raised concerns among the environmental lobby that exploration of Lake Vostok might “contaminate” an otherwise pristine eco-system. All this seems quite reasonable, until you factor in what happened in February, and the reaction to it.

A team of scientists from Columbia University, working under the auspices of the NSF, early in 2001 began a series of unprecedented low-altitude aerial surveys over Lake Vostok, designed to chart gravitational, magnetic

and thermal activity under the ice. In the course of doing so, they made a stunning find. A huge magnetic anomaly was discovered covering the entire Southeast portion of the shore of the Lake. This remarkable anomaly, which is discrepant from the background by over 1,000 nanoteslas (a significant variance, compared to daily variations in the Earth’s magnetic field), could of course be caused by “natural” processes. One possibility, voiced by Columbia’s Michael Studinger, is that the Earth’s crust in the vicinity of the Lake is simply thinner under this section of Antarctica, having been stretched during the formation of the lake bed itself. This, according to Studinger, would result in a “local magnetic anomaly.” Others, like Enterprise con-

sulting geologist Ron Nicks, have serious difficulty with this theory. Nicks explains that such a thinning would heat the underlying rock and thus diminish (rather than increase – as observed) the crust's ability to locally amplify the Earth's magnetic field.

There is, as always, an equally viable alternative explanation. An anomaly like this could also be caused by an accumulation of metals — the kind you would get if you found the ruins of an ancient, buried city!

An “ancient city under the ice?” Such a discovery would be absolutely dazzling, sending shockwaves through our world as profound as the discovery of “artifacts on Mars” or “ruins on the Moon.” And the notion is not as improbable as you may think.

There is a growing trend toward the acceptance of the notion of “catastrophism” as a viable alternative to conventional geologic models. This is in opposition to the current (but retreating) geological model, called “gradualism” — the concept that geologic changes only happen slowly, over eons. However, more and more evidence has mounted (from the Vostok ice cores, for example) that climatological changes can happen rapidly. Some attribute these “catastrophic” changes in the record to sudden polar shifts. Many researchers, from a variety of evidence, have put the last such sudden shift at around 13,000 years ago.

Under this “catastrophic” model, Antarctica might well have been a temperate, even a jungle Continent, as recently as that 13KYA time frame. A sudden change in the Earth's alignment relative to the sun would have plunged this once hospitable land into a perpetual freezing hell, as cold as Mars in some places. Indeed, it is easy to see Antarctica as Hitler did, as the source of worldwide “Atlantis” legends we have all heard and read. According to least one source, Dr. Werner Von Braun of NASA was convinced that Hitler's belief in an “Atlantis below the ice” was correct.

This admittedly far-fetched notion, however, begins to take on an air of viability when viewed in the extraordinary context of recent events.

Almost immediately after the discovery of the Columbia “Vostok magnetic anomaly,” word began to leak out that JPL was inexplicably “pulling back from its Vostok exploration program.” The reason given was the previously stated “environmental concerns.” This was all well and good, until unconfirmed reports began to surface that a JPL spokesperson had admitted at a February press conference that the National Security Agency (NSA) had literally taken over the JPL polar research program at Lake Vostok. It was this report which created something of a firestorm on the Internet.



Several sources immediately pointed to the fact that the location of the “Vostok anomaly” is quite close to coordinates shown in the *X-Files* movie regarding the fictional location of a massive, “buried alien spacecraft.” In fact, the Russian Vostok Base is the closest base of any kind to the coordinates given in the movie. (All this reminded us, of course, of our own previous suspicions about the true source of some of *X-Files* creator Chris Carter's story ideas ....)

The discovery of the peculiar Vostok anomaly underneath the ice — encompassing an area almost 3,000 miles in area — was also eerily reminiscent of a French novel, “Subterranean,” in which Antarctic scientists discover an inhabited “Lost City” under the ice.

And there were even stranger stories suddenly coming from the “bottom of the world” in this same time frame.

A December 2000 report, carried in the States by NPR, stated that “someone at McMurdo had become disoriented” and began to spread the rumor of a “UFO landing” in Antarctica. There was even a poster circulating though the Base, depicting a giant spacecraft hovering directly over McMurdo! The individual supposedly responsible was promptly “deported” from the Continent — literally put on the next plane back to New Zealand (the official gateway to McMurdo)! Equally bizarre, at least three scientists — including the Russian discoverer of a remarkable set of geometric “dunes,” seen directly above the strongest region of the Vostok anomaly — have died on the Continent in the past two years. Curiously, the causes of these deaths — all of them young men in their thirties and forties — have not been reported.

Whether the story about the JPL press conference is, in fact, the truth (we have yet to substantiate the actual report), still stranger things began to happen down South. Initially, it was reported that the doctor at the South Pole (the second replacement in two years at the Amundson-Scott Base) needed an unprecedented airlift extraction (this late in the season) — because of “complications from a gall stone.” Then, coincident with that, other re-



ports began to surface of the need for four more medical extractions, in an equally unprecedented fashion, from the coastal base at McMurdo Station, the largest US base on the entire Continent. Again, as with the previously reported deaths, the reasons were somewhat mysterious as to the precise need for these “emergency medical extractions.” Public speculation has hinged on the idea that someone coming into McMurdo from New Zealand brought “something” with them from home, some kind of infectious disease, that was subsequently spreading among the isolated population there.

However, this is extremely unlikely. Precisely because of the isolated population in Antarctica, immigrants are screened for a wide range of diseases before being allowed on the Continent. In fact, upon arrival, they are quarantined for a number of days — to ensure they have not brought any “friends from home” with them. And, as is well known, the environmental conditions in Antarctica are so harsh that normal viruses and other microbial life cannot readily survive (even common colds are vanishingly rare), virtually guaranteeing that nobody in this instance caught a case of the “Antarctic flu.”

**S**o what’s happening? Two thoughts immediately spring to mind: One is that some “Special Project” has, against all scientific and environmental prudence, indeed drilled through the ice into the Lake Vostok eco-system (clandestinely, of course). And, the participants have suddenly found themselves exposed to “something” for which their bodies literally have no immunity — something not extant in the rest of Earth’s biosphere for between 13,000 and several million years! After the initial reports of “four emergency extractions,” the number changed to five ... and now twelve McMurdo personnel are supposedly in need of a dangerous, “emergency medical evacuation” well into the Antarctic winter season. At one level, this has all the earmarks of “something” virulently spreading among the limited winter population at the Base, something that even the fairly complete medical facilities at McMurdo can no longer cope with. Complicating the picture is the fact that the “extractees” are not research scientists or long-term support personnel, but are all employees of Raytheon Corporation — a high-tech firm that is deeply involved in a variety of black-ops programs for the U.S. government all around the world.

This idea (that these two simultaneous “emergencies” are actually due to some kind of “black ops fiasco” in Antarctica) is reinforced by another little-noticed story coming out of the Amundsen-Scott Base — that the doctor being brought in (to replace the ailing doctor) has been asked to also bring in “an emergency supply of salt.” She’s even been asked to “stuff her own pockets full of salt packets,” ostensibly because there is “no room on the rescue aircraft itself.” This is obviously a silly, thinly-veiled “cover story” ... designed to tell someone “outside” ... “something.” Salt is crucial to survival in outdoor conditions in Antarctica.

Obviously the Base, after years of operation, would have a pretty good handle on just how much salt is needed until the next re-supply plane arrives. So how is it that they suddenly find themselves desperately without any of it left?

Maybe, because they suddenly had a unique situation. Maybe because a team of scientists and engineers from Raytheon spent a lot of unplanned days out on the wind-swept ice, frantically drilling against the clock, in an all-out effort to break through to the Lake below — and in the process, used far more than the normal complement of salt to survive.

The other possibility for the sudden, simultaneous “evacuations” is even more extraordinary.

What if these Raytheon black ops personnel did indeed find “something” in their secret drilling under Vostok -- and needed to get it back to civilization ASAP for in-depth study. Under this scenario, the whole idea of an “outbreak” is simply a ruse to cover the need for a large airplane (a New Zealand C-130 Hercules) dramatically visiting McMurdo at a time never attempted in all its years before: the only “way out” for something very important from the Continent. How do you cover such an operation? Put all the medical hints out there, and wait for the Internet conspiracists to “figure out” that there has been some kind of outbreak at McMurdo (there has been NO official confirmation of this theory, by the way), all the while covering your real agenda — which is to get your hands on a genuine artifact from “Zep-Tepi” before the dead of the Antarctic winter makes any such attempt this year impossible!

This “conspiracy within a conspiracy” would seem a little far-fetched even to us were it not for one inescapable reality — It’s 2001. This whole weird scenario, the discovery of a magnetic anomaly at an isolated location, the secret digging to uncover an ancient artifact, the danger of shattering social consequences if the information is not properly contained, the concoction of an epidemic as a cover story for the secret activities around the extraction of the artifact — is straight out of Clarke’s “2001” playbook! The only real difference is the location of the artifact, Antarctica, instead of the Moon! Indeed, even the date — 2001 — is dead on.

Anybody wonder if maybe Clarke knew something about “AMA-1” when he wrote his story more than three decades ago?

The parallels to us are striking. Remember, we have been warning all along that “2001” was Special, that a veil would begin to lift in this most crucial year .... All of us have been looking to Mars. Maybe, we should have been paying more attention to our own backyard.

Rest assured, we will be watching developments at the South Pole with great interest the rest of the year. After all, it is 2001.

**Richard Hoagland and Michael Bara’s reports can be found at [www.enterprisemission.org](http://www.enterprisemission.org)**



# SPACE:

## the final frontier

yeah, well, it could be “Zep Tepi” under Lake Vostok, but maybe the truth is a little closer to our time, as IAN WISHART reports

**S**o what's really going on in Antarctica? The emergency evacuation by New Zealand Airforce Hercules of 11 US Raytheon employees raised more than a few eyebrows around the world, particularly because of the secrecy surrounding the circumstances of the emergency.

For starters, mid-winter flights to the ice in total darkness, and where the temperature is low enough to freeze the plane's fuel and oil within minutes, not to mention the cost, mean something fairly significant must have taken place.

Raytheon initially reported two people would be airlifted out with undisclosed medical conditions. Then word was released to the media that at least four people required medical evacuations. Then the media were informed that a further seven Raytheon staff were being hauled off the ice on the same evac flight, for undisclosed personal reasons.

Upon arrival in Christchurch, security personnel kept the news media and television crews well away from any chance of filming the affected personnel disembarking from the flight.

Raytheon's man in Christchurch, John Sherve, did confirm that four staff were en route to hospital, two of them in “critical but stable condition”.

However, when TV cameras caught up with one alleged Raytheon staff member in hospital, there was no sign of life threatening head trauma as suggested.

Although Sherve ridiculed what he described as some “out there” reports on the Art Bell show in the US, and denied that any staff had been affected by radiation, his explanation for the urgent message to medics heading down to “fill your pockets with salt” was “yes, they were told that. They've run out of cooking salt.”

With salt a critical commodity on the ice, and McMurdo at the start of an Antarctic winter, commentators have expressed doubt that the base would run out of salt so soon, or that such a message would be passed to doctors, rather than added to the usual base shopping list.

But the phrase “fill your pockets with salt” is also nuclear industry idiom for “Houston, we have a problem”. Iodine, an ingredient of iodised salt, is an emergency medicine for people exposed to radiation.

You can see now why people began to get suspicious.

Paranoia levels on the internet and in the media rose dramatically amid news reports on New Zealand television that the evacuation had been prompted by an all-out brawl on the ice involving Raytheon personnel, a story which conflicts with the “off the record” explanation of routine personal health problems.

So I return to the initial question: what's really going on on the ice?

For the first time, *Investigate* can confirm that US military personnel have been dealing for some years with a nuclear waste leak on the ice continent.

And there's more than one. In 1964, a US military satellite crashed back into the atmosphere, scattering radioactive plutonium over a wide area, and in October of 2000 a scientific team reported extensive radioactive contamination in an area of Antarctica, “consistent” with the fallout from the nuclear-powered satellite.

But the second incident we are aware of is just as problematic. Intercepted US Naval communications, recorded by some New Zealanders using sophisticated scanning equipment, show a major radiation problem has emerged there.

The transmissions, recorded in 1992, revealed that a



number of nuclear powered RTG generators are in use in Antarctica - the United States has never ratified the area's nuclear free status. But one of the devices had developed a major malfunction and was "slowly sinking into the icecap" according to one of the US military transmissions recorded.

The McMurdo personnel, in discussing how to deal with the rogue RTG, let slip valuable background material, such as the fact that the US Environmental Protection Agency had threatened to lay criminal charges against the US Navy for mishandling "Antarctic radwaste" once it was landed stateside. They also revealed that "permits to move waste through Lyttelton have been granted by the NZ MOT, no problems", and that the amount of radioactive waste in Antarctica is beginning to create some serious problems.

This, on top of some radioactive waste left over from another damaged nuclear reactor allegedly removed from McMurdo back in 1973. That waste is believed to have been dumped just outside New Zealand's 12 mile territorial waters.

Official US Government documents, quoted by renowned US nuclear expert Karl Grossman, contain the following major titbit:

"Indeed, Star Wars, as conceived by the US national nuclear laboratories and military, has had a large nuclear component. Work proceeded secretly through the 1980s, at a cost of \$800 million, on development of rockets propelled by nuclear power to loft 'giant weapons and other military payloads into space'. From the start, scientists calculated the risk in lives and took the gamble.

"A flight test of a nuclear rocket, codenamed Timberwind, was planned, mostly across Antarctica to avoid areas of human population, but the route also took

caused another Antarctic tragedy and that all this desperate midwinter activity is linked to that? Well if you think it's all just conspiracy theory and that you couldn't keep a secret like that, try this for size:

When Apollo 13 suffered its massive flight malfunction en route to the Moon, and later portrayed in the 1995 movie, what NASA didn't tell anyone who didn't "need to know" was that a nuclear generator similar to the one melting through the icecap was on board the crippled spacecraft containing about four kilos of plutonium 238.

"On the surface of the moon," wrote astronaut Jim Lovell later, "the tiny generator posed no danger to anybody. But what, some people worried, would happen if the little rod of nuclear fuel never made it to the moon? Now it was on its way home, heading for the fiery re-entry the doomsayers had feared."

As they struggled to regain control of Apollo 13, NASA managed to jettison the plutonium reactor. According to NASA documentation it was "successfully targeted to deposit intact...off New Zealand, where it is effectively isolated from man's environment."

Not having learnt its lesson, the American space agency is now deploying satellites and rockets carrying more than 30 kilos of plutonium at a time, each with a risk of explosion or malfunction, as is often seen on the news. Experts estimate that if one of these payloads breaks up in the atmosphere, the death toll from radiation induced cancers over subsequent decades could be in the region of 30 to 40 million people worldwide.

When the Cassini rocket orbited Earth before taking off for Saturn in 1999, NASA had a worst case scenario that an accidental reentry into earth's atmosphere meant that

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the rocket over New Zealand. Sandia National Laboratories projected the likelihood of the atomic rocket crashing there at 1 in 2,325.

"This may sound fairly good odds," notes Professor Grossman wryly, "but remember NASA put the odds of a space shuttle crash at 1 in 100,000 before the Challenger exploded."

And the reason President Bush was able to dust off the Star Wars project so easily is because the Clinton administration allowed research to continue on Timberwind and Star Wars at the rate of US\$3 billion per year. At last official report, Antarctica and New Zealand were still on the flightpath.

Is it possible US nuclear rocket tests have accidentally

"approximately five billion...could receive 99 percent or more of the radiation exposure."

The point of this history lesson? If you personally were not aware that New Zealand almost got bounced by four kilos of plutonium dust in the abortive Apollo 13 mission, or that NZ and Antarctica are possible drop zones if a nuclear rocket malfunctions, then why is it difficult to accept that it might actually be a lot "hotter" down in Antarctica than officials, and official-dependent news media - have let on.

It is a verifiable fact that the United States has a nuclear radiation leak problem in Antarctica. What we don't yet know is the source.

