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General Doolittle and the ghost rockets

- we have searched the Swedish archives for the answer!

Doolittle med Spitfirehjärte.

*30 sekunder
över Tokio —
2 dagar här.*

*"Golfparti den mest
spännande upplevelsen"*

Har ni hört talas om vice verkställande direktören i Shellol, mr James Doolittle? Jaså inte. Men "30-sekunders"-generalen James Doolittle, som med Tokioraiden den 18 april kunde notera den första stjärnan på det amerikanska flygets vapensköld, är kanske mer bekant. Dessa båda herrar i en person anlände kl. 16.20



Douglas Badstuber

J. Doolittle

AFU Newsletter 36

General Doolittle and the ghost rockets by Anders Liljegren

On Tuesday August 20, 1946, General James H. Doolittle arrived at the Bromma airport of Stockholm. His visit to Sweden has been a subject of much speculation in ufology. It has been surmised that Doolittle's arrival was somehow connected to American intelligence interest in the appearance over Sweden of the mysterious "ghost rockets", that summer. Doolittle's role in the 1946 drama has even promoted him to a position as one of the possible secret members of a MJ-12-like high level UFO study group.

General Doolittle was one of the most well-known military stars, fostered by WWII. Doolittle planned and commanded American/allied bomb raids over Africa, Italy, Germany and Japan. "His expansive character and aggressiveness won the loyalty of his men, and concealed a shrewd tactician, skilled and persuasive", says one bibliographical dictionary. Doolittle was wellknown, even in Sweden, as the American who initiated the first 30 seconds American bomber strike on Tokyo in 1942. His visit to Sweden caused first-page articles in leading Swedish newspapers.

After demobilization the general had, since about six months, taken on the position as vice president of the Shell oil company, where he had previously been an employee, during a ten year period between the wars. The official reason for the two-night stay in Stockholm was to confer with his colleagues of Swedish Shell, selling oil and gasoline and discussing mutual problems. Doolittle continued to Copenhagen on Thursday, Aug. 22. That his trip would have a connection



"Doolittle, world famous air general, who will arrive in Stockholm tomorrow" (From "Expressen", August 19, 1946).

with the ghost rockets was emphatically denied by the management of Swedish Shell.

On the other hand - and this has inspired much suspicion - the general was to have an evening lunch (on Wednesday, August 21) with general Nordenskiöld, head of the Swedish Air Force, and some other Swedish military high brass. The lunch was on Operakällaren, one of the most wellknown restaurants in central Stockholm. But, according to one newspaper the meeting was to discuss "military oil problems", not ghost rockets.

Douglas Bader

In Sweden, Doolittle was accompanied by his wife and by Douglas Bader, another wellknown air-ace of the war years. (1) Bader had lost both legs in a plane crash in 1931, then used wooden legs, and was therefore refused by the British Royal Air Force. After a spectacular air show before an RAF audience, Bader finally talked himself into the force and became, despite his handicap, one of the most skillful and famous war fighter pilots. His life story is a legend in military and aviation circles.

In his very interesting biography on Bader, Paul Brickhill (2) chronicles the 1946 period in the epilogue:

In July 1946, after six years of military service, Bader had gone back to work for the Shell group. He was officially head of Shell's Aviation Department in London. Shell bought a small four-seated low-wing Percival Proctor private plane for Bader to fly. The Proctor was painted silvery and christened "Willie Uncle" by Bader, after the last two letters in the official registration code: G-AHWU. Bader's first job was to fly Doolittle on a European-African promotion tour for Shell.

The Bader-Doolittle tour

Writes Brickhill:

"In August he (Bader) started off on his first trip, accompanied by lieutenant general Doolittle, Shell bigwig in the USA. They were a good company. Doolittle was as dynamic as him (Bader), short and stocky, with a sense for being a friend with everyone from the clerk up to the chairman of the board. He won the Schneider cup in 1926, was Americas most famous pilot and had led the famous carrier-based raid on Tokyo in 1942, one of the war's most daring feats."

"First stop was Oslo, where they had an audience with king Haakon... In Stockholm a radio reporter asked him about the most thrilling experience of his life, and Bader said: - When I had a tour of the Hoylake golf course a few weeks ago. Then on to Copenhagen, the Hague and Paris and receptions at every place. With Doolittle beside him in the Proctor he flew to Marseille, Nice and Rome, over the Mediterranean to Tunis, Alger, Tanger and Casablanca."

"With only one or two days in each place, champagne and kindness, the pace of the trip took its toll, although Bader never touched the champagne..." (Brickhill then tells an amusing, but long, story of Bader falling asleep during a dinner in Casablanca..). "Then on to Lisbon, Madrid and Paris and back again to West Africa... Down through Bordeaux, Perpignan, Barcelona, Tanger, Agadir to the steaming heat of Dakar, further on to Lagos and Leopoldville in Belgian Congo."

What airplane?

The evening newspaper Expressen surmised that Doolittle would arrive in Stockholm "on the regular Oslo plane" at 13.45 hours. Another paper, Stockholms-Tidningen, stated (Aug. 21) that Doolittle and Bader had been delayed by the audience with king Haakon, "and arrived on an extra flight this afternoon".

Svenska Dagbladet, usually a reliable newspaper, published a lively description of the landing, that differs, however, from these sources, and from the biography by Brickhill:

"...the two arrived at 16.20 hours at Bromma in "Hellsapoppin", the private plane of the American military attaché in Oslo. As the Witchcraft landed, first an elegant, grey-haired lady jumped out. It was the general's wife. Then came an American officer."

At this moment one must stop and ask: Was there something wrong with the Proctor plane? Could the officer that jumped out of the plane (Doolittle and Bader were both in civilian clothes), have been the American attaché in Oslo who, for some reason, had lent his plane to Bader/Doolittle..? Anyway, Svenska Dagbladet continued their painted picture of the reception:

"The photographers flashlights popped, but it wasn't Doolittle. Only a while later did he come out, a middle-aged rather small but stocky man in a blue costume and gray felt hat. When one asks him to lift his hat and wave to the photographers...he says with a brilliant smile "I'm not a very good actor", and disappears in a waiting car." (3)

Expressen further speculated that a lot of "gold-laced dignitaries" would be present at the airport. This may have been the truth. A sign in that direction is that "the ghost rocket committee"

(headed by Colonel Bengt Jacobsson), on just one day's notice postponed its planned meeting at 14.00 hours on Tuesday, August 20, until the following Friday, August 23. Possibly some of the colonels of the committee were present at Bromma airport, but this is mere speculation.

The Shell oil company was reportedly represented at Bromma by its Swedish director K. Holt-huis, and the Shell principal manager for Scandinavia, director C. Lejdström. The American embassy was represented by the military attaché Brigadier General Alfred A. Kessler and a "Major Cornrade" (3) (this could be S.W. Connelly, assistant military attaché at this time - AL).

General Sarnoff

The New York Times (3) connected the Doolittle-Bader visit with yet another war-star's arrival in Stockholm on that very same day, August 20.

General David Sarnoff, president of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), and former member of Eisenhower's war staff, arrived independently of Doolittle/Bader, in the company of his secretary, Mr. Moore and RCA's Scandinavian representative, Mr. Matcen. According to Svenska Dagbladet the company arrived by regular plane from Oslo in the morning of August 20.

While Doolittle was at the beginning of a monthly business tour, Sarnoff was at the end of his European tour, which had started out on July 15. Sarnoff returned for London and New York on the Friday, August 23.

Sarnoff was a pioneer in the field of electronics, whose fame started when as a young telegrapher he picked up the S.O.S. from the sinking Titanic in 1912. Sarnoff founded a giant electronic and media empire that included RCA and NBC. (4)

The three military aces (Doolittle, Bader and Sarnoff) were portrayed as a group by several Stockholm newspapers on August 21, so they must have gotten together in Stockholm. Svenska Dagbladet reported that Doolittle had an evening press conference on Strand Hotel in central Stockholm, and this is probably where the group photos were taken.

The New York Times reported that Colonel Kempff, head of the Defence Staff, was "extremely interested in asking the two generals advice (on the ghost rockets) and, if possible, would place all available reports before them." (5)

Doolittle stated to Stockholms-Tidningen:

- We are not here for any military negotiations, only for our company. Of course we would like to stay in Sweden more than two days, but... Maybe I would be able to see one of the renowned ghost bombs. Naturally, I don't know anything about them, but I would be glad if I did. (6)

More bold was Sarnoff, according to Morgon-Tidningen:

- I have read some about the ghost bombs in the press. It would be easy to confirm their origin, by radio-technical means, and if the Swedish state would use my services I wouldn't hesitate. But I suspect they have their own experts and will not divulge any of their results.



*Air heroes on business trip to Stockholm: 'Just show me a ghost rocket, and I will tell you where it started from' From left to right: Doolittle, Sarnoff (seated) and Bader.

Sarnoff said he was in Sweden..to make contacts with Swedish men in the radio business. We are planning a distribution centre in Sweden." (7)

To Svenska Dagbladet he said that he was here to investigate which of his company's new inventions (television was one, radar another) that would be of use to Europeans. (3)

It must be remembered that these visits to Sweden were no unusual occurrences in 1946. Industrial, trade and political delegations arrived almost daily in the summer of 1946. Sweden had proclaimed neutrality and had managed - tip-toe on a string - to stay out of WWII. Sweden headed for the post-war era with an undamaged, fairly modern industry, that would eventually evolve into world-wide concerns such as Volvo, Electrolux, SAAB, Ericsson and Asea. Sweden had started to build a large air force, that eventually became the 4th largest in the world by the early 50's. The planes were largely "home-made" (by SAAB). Thus

there was every reason for having trade talks with Swedish men of power: industrialists, technicians, military men, and politicians.

The Kempff letter

Researching the ghost rocket phenomenon at various Stockholm archives Clas Svahn and I found two interesting documents that cast new light, and doubt, on the Doolittle and Sarnoff involvement with "ghost rockets". One of these documents was found at the War Archives in Stockholm, in a box of correspondence between the foreign section of the Defence Staff and the Swedish military attachées in Washington. (8)

The letter was written to Colonel Arvid Eriksson, Swedish military attaché in Washington, just nine days after the Doolittle-Nordenskiöld dinner at Operakällaren.

Author of the document was Colonel Curt Kempff (interviewed by the New York Times above), who headed the foreign section (attachés, espionage, etc) of the Defence Staff's Section II since October 1943. One of Kempff's duties was to keep up the routine "hand letters correspondence" with Swedish military attachés around the world. I will translate the letter in it's entirety:

Stockholm, the 30th of August, 1946.

Hb 484

Brother,

About a week ago there was a strange incident, about which I feel I should inform you.

As you no doubt have seen in the newspapers the American General Doolittle, and another high-ranking officer, visited Stockholm for commercial reasons a while ago. I was then acting as Chief of the Defence Staff. One evening immediately after the arrival of these gentlemen I was called on the telephone by an American journalist in Stockholm (I did not catch his name with certainty, but I believe it was Axelson of the Washington Post) who said that he knew that general D. very much would like to put his experience concerning rocket missiles at the disposal of Swedish authorities, especially in view of the current ghost bomb affair. I answered that I would investigate the possibilities of making a contact and asked him to call me back the next day.

The next day I spoke to Air Force General Nordenskiöld and he told me that on that same day he would have dinner with D., thus it was superbly fitting for D. to convey his views on this occasion. When, about an hour later, I was called up by the American journalist I told him that N. and D. would meet at a dinner and the desired contact could thus be established.

A few days later I learned that N. had asked D. at the dinner whether he had anything to say, but had, to his surprise, gotten the answer that D. had no viewpoints at all to give us in this matter. I then took the incident as a sign of an enterprising American journalist's zealotry in connection with the visit.

The affair wasn't over with this, however. The other day I had a visit from the acting British military attaché here, major de Salis, who showed me the transcript of a despatch from his colleague in Washington. In this I read - with my own eyes - that according to some information general D. would have contacted the acting Chief of the Defence Staff, that's me, and at that occasion given us some information concerning the rocket missile issue. De Salis now wondered what was true about this and whether he could have part of this valuable briefing. I answered by relating the course of events described above.

With best wishes
/signed/ C. Kempff

This confidential letter, written in trust to the Swedish military attaché in Washington, and probably sent through diplomatic channels, carries inside information from the Swedish military headquarters about Doolittle's superficial knowledge and interest in the ghost rockets, a low-key interest which would be atypical of an intelligence man sent out on a mission to collect valuable information.

The Rydbeck letter

Another letter, in similar spirit, was found at the National Archives. (9) It was written on Aug. 22 by Olof Rydbeck, ambassador at the legation of Sweden in Washington (later wellknown as the head of the Swedish broadcasting corporation), to the counsellor of legation Dahlman at the Swedish ministry of foreign affairs (state department). A copy of the letter arrived at Kempff's office in late August.

Washington, August 22, 1946.

Brother,

General Doolittle's and now also General Sarnoff's visits to Sweden have been noted by several newspapers and caused a number of questions from newspapers and news agencies. We have denied that the visit should have been inspired from the Swedish side, due to the rocket bombs. According to several of the questioners, the War Department (in Washington - AL) had also stated that they had no

knowledge of any connection between the general's voyages and the mysterious bombs.

According to yesterday's New York Times the Defence Staff Colonel Kempff would have said he was urgent to consult with the two American experts. Today's issue of the newspaper reports that Doolittle has met the head of the Air Force. At the same time a telegram from London is published according to which English radar materials are being demonstrated to Swedish buyers. The cited clippings are enclosed.

Sincerely,
/signed/ Olof Rydbeck

If there was any truth to the rumours about an active exchange of information between Swedish authorities and two semi-military American generals, both seemingly out of active duty, this would be indicated by the Confidential and Secret Swedish correspondence files we have gone through, particularly the formerly Secret attaché correspondence files. The files we have searched contain attaché contacts with the USA, UK, the Soviet Union, and other countries.

On one hand, sending two high-profile ex-generals on widely reported visits to Sweden would be completely out of line with intelligence operating procedures. On the other hand, there are direct traces of the more regular day-by-day question-and-answer contacts at the military, attaché level of intelligence. Detailed questions asked by American intelligence (the military attaché in Stockholm) were duly answered by members of the Swedish "space projectile" committee in the summer and autumn period of 1946.

On June 20, 1947 (four days before the Kenneth Arnold sighting), the Swedish Defence Staff sent it's attaché in Washington, Colonel Arvid Eriksson, excerpts from the final Secret ghost rocket report prepared by the Staff in December 1946. (10)

Seemingly, this information did not reach American authorities, who once again, in the wake of the summer 1947 wave of discs (and also many rocket-like objects.!!) questioned Swedish authorities for more complete information. A watered-down version of the final Secret report was received by the US attachées in Stockholm in September 1947, translated and sent to American intelligence agencies. (11)

The Doolittle-Sarnoff connection was evidently a media product. Colonel Kempff complained in another letter to Colonel Eriksson in Washington about a Mr. Sieburg, correspondent of Time and Life magazines who visited the Defence Staff to discuss the ghost rockets. Sieburg had difficulty to understand that no hard traces had been produced by the phenomenon.

Kempff had referred Sieburg to Major Nils Ahlgren, who headed the day-by-day routine investi-

gations, but suspected that "something indiscreet" would appear in Time or Life. (12)

Was Doolittle into UFOs?

Doolittle has, since 1946, become a popular figure in conspiracy theories. Suspicions have also centered on Sarnoff. Stanton Friedman found a letter, at the Harry S. Truman Library, an invitation for Sarnoff to meet president Truman on Sept. 25, 1946. What was discussed at that meeting? Sarnoff's visit to Sweden? (13)

During a speech at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on Sept. 30, Sarnoff said he was convinced that the ghost rockets was no myth but real missiles. (14) Friedman speculates that Doolittle or Sarnoff wrote a report on the ghost rockets for "at least Eisenhower then Chief of Staff". (15)

William L. Moore and Citizens Against UFO Secrecy have both traced copies of the 9 January, 1947, issue of "Intelligence Review", that put doubts on the reporting about Doolittle:

"The Scandinavian press, with the exception of the Communist papers, initially reported the incidents in some detail and openly attributed them to missiles fired by the U.S.S.R....The Communist press has continued to ridicule the matter... In fact, a charge was made that they came from the United States and that Gen. Doolittle was sent over to observe the effects of the missiles!" (16)

Roswell and MJ-12

Doolittle, in 1947 back in military duty, has been reported, by one of Leonard Stringfield's sources, as one of the "top Air Force generals" to have flown in and out of New Mexico in July 1947, seemingly in connection with the Roswell crash. Another of Stringfield's sources spoke of "a special intelligence organization" to investigate the WWII foo fighters, "headed by Doolittle, maybe." (17)

William L. Moore also reports some high-level meetings on July 9-10, 1947 - immediately after the Roswell crash, where generals Vandenburg and Doolittle took part. They met with Air Force Secretary Stewart Symington and president Truman. For what purpose? (18)

Further, Loren Gross found a 1952 BlueBook document where General Doolittle was suggested as a member of a small "High Level Advisory Committee" to oversee and counsel UFO research at ATIC, if Project Bluebook was to be expanded. (19)

Stanton Friedman has made further attempts to involve Doolittle with high-level UFO research. In his "Final report on Operation Majestic 12", Friedman links Doolittle to general Twining, Detlev Bronk, and other claimed members of the super-secret MJ-12 committee. Friedman reports that Doolittle in 1948 became a member of the board

of NACA (the forerunner of NASA), and NACA's chairman in 1956. In 1953 he headed Project Solarium a Top Secret task force directed against the Soviet Union. Doolittle was "one of the first recipients of a PhD in Aeronautics (from MIT where (Vannevar) Bush was a dean)." (20)

Doolittle denials

In an October 1981 interview with Moore, Doolittle stated that he was "unable to recall the exact purpose of his visit to Stockholm". He was, however, able to produce copies of his travel itineraries containing the precise details of his trips as well as stopover points both before and after his arrival in Sweden. Doolittle also admitted that he "probably submitted a report" on the results of his "European activities" to the "proper authorities" upon his return, but no copy of such a report has ever surfaced.

Moore noted "no mention of the Doolittle-Sarnoff visit in the large file of official cables which passed between the American embassy at Stockholm and the State Department in Washington. If the generals' visit was as "routine" as some at the time tried to make it appear, then the absence of official diplomatic communications on the subject is most unusual", wrote Moore. (21)

Moore may be right, but there is a much more likely explanation for the silence: that Doolittle was on a purely civilian, commercial tour and had no active interest or connection to the ghost rocket investigations.

A co-worker of Moore, Hal Starr, commented on Moore's article that "the General told me a couple of years before (Moore's) interview with him: "I never went to Sweden to investigate so-called ghost rockets which some people claimed were flying saucers." This in spite of the fact that his trip and its purpose were reported in major newspapers all over the world." (22)

This statement by Doolittle is interesting, however, if taken in a literal sense. Doolittle does not deny going to Sweden, which obviously he did!, but denies investigating ghost rockets. That view compares well with the Curt Kempff letter found at the Stockholm War Archives.

Another activist to contact Doolittle was Barry J. Greenwood, of Citizens Against UFO Secrecy (CAUS). On August 29, 1984 Doolittle responded:

Dear Mr. Greenwood,

I have no firm knowledge of actual rockets or "ghost rockets" in Sweden. Did know, of course, that various hypotheses were being bandied about - largely by the press.

*Every good wish. Very sincerely,
/signed/ J. H. Doolittle*

Greenwood commented: "The question now is was Doolittle's trip to Sweden for a "ghost rocket" investigation, or was the story a journalistic blunder?" (23)

Greenwood, one of the sanest voices in the American ufological wilderness, hits the nail on its head with that statement. As has been demonstrated in this article, there is absolutely no evidence, from Swedish sources, of Doolittle's supposed interest in the ghost rockets. Doolittle may have truthfully stated this fact to various ufologists, but will they believe him?

Notes:

1. Expressen, Aug. 19, 1946
2. Paul Brickhill: Reach for the Sky. 1954. The English translation was made from the Swedish edition, "Han gav sig aldrig". The British original edition is not in our possession.
3. Svenska Dagbladet, Aug. 21, 1946.
4. Sandra Hochmann & Sybil Wong: Satellite Spies. 1976. pp. 137, 148.
5. The New York Times, Aug. 20, 1946
6. Stockholms-Tidningen, Aug. 21, 1946.
7. Morgon Tidningen, Aug. 21, 1946.
8. Defence Staff (Försvarsstaben): Foreign Section, Bl: 1, volume 1. War Archives, Stockholm.
9. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Utrikesdepartementet): Dossier, volume 1490. National Archives, Stockholm.
10. Letters from G. Tham to Arvid Eriksson, May 16 and June 20, 1947. (Defence Staff: Foreign Section).
11. Don Berliner: The ghost rockets of Sweden. Official UFO, October 1976. Berliner found the document at the Smithsonian Institution's National Air & Space Museum.
12. Letter from Curt Kempff to Arvid Eriksson, Sept 20, 1946. (Defence Staff: Foreign Section).
13. Copy of telegram from Matthew J. Connolley, The White House, to Sarnoff, Sept 16, 1946. (Truman Memorial Library).
14. New York Times, Oct 1, 1946.
15. Letter to the author from Stanton T. Friedman, Oct. 7, 1982.
16. "Intelligence Review", Number 47, 9 Jan 1947, Intelligence Division, WDGS, War Department, Washington D.C. Found by Moore at the Harry S. Truman Library, Naval Aide files, and obtained by CAUS from the Air Force's historical center.
17. Leonard H. Stringfield: UFO crash/retrievals: the inner sanctum. Status report VI. 1991. pp. 22-24, 28 and 31.
18. 1982 MUFON symposium proceedings, pp. 100-101.
19. Loren Gross: UFO's a history. 1952: November-December, p. 85.
20. Stanton T. Friedman: Final report on Operation Majestic 12. 1990. pp. 11 and 28.
21. William L. Moore: New data on the ghost rockets. Focus, vol. I, no. 3, May 31, 1985.
22. Focus (W.L. Moore), vol. I, no. 6, Aug. 1985.
23. Barry J. Greenwood: Doolittle comments on "ghost rockets", Just Cause, June 1990, page 8.