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Exploring psychic weapons

BODY:

On the third Tuesday of every month in the fall and winter of 1980, a bizarre rendezvous allegedly took place in Washington, D.C. A Navy officer in a plain civilian suit carried a briefcase handcuffed to his wrist into the parlor of "Madame Zodiac," psychic and palm reader. By looking at top-secret photographs and charts, the clairvoyant attempted to predict the movements of Soviet submarines off the East Coast. Madame Zodiac's payment: \$ 400 cash.

Ronald McRae, a former investigative reporter for Columnist Jack Anderson, tells of this type of clandestine assignation and of other operations between the Pentagon had the so-called psychic community in his book Mind Wars, to be published this spring. It is one of several forthcoming works, written by both skeptics and believers, on the military's forays into parapsychology, the quasi-science that studies the interaction of mind and matter. According to McRae, who is skeptical of psychic claims, the Department of Defense has spent \$ 6 million annually in recent years to research such phenomena as extrasensory perception (E.S.P.) and mental telepathy.

The Pentagon denies any interest in parapsychology. A Defense Department spokesman said last week that officials had scrutinized the budgets for fiscal years 1983 and 1984 "and can find no monies that have been spent for E.S.P. or whatever sort of label you want to put on those programs." But in an interview with the New York Times, retired Lieut. General Daniel O. Graham, former head of the defense Intelligence Agency, indicated that the military had unquestionably been involved in psychic research. While he considered McRae's \$ 6 million budget figure an exaggeration, he said, "I wouldn't be surprised if the intelligence community were following this. They would be remiss if they didn't."

McRae claims the Pentagon financed psychic research to study the "shell game" basing mode for the MX missile, a system that would attempt to confuse Soviet military strategists by shifting missiles among a number of concrete shelters. Other esoteric programs uncovered by McRae include titles like "Novel Biological Information Transfer Systems," apparently the Pentagon's way of saying E.S.P.

Back in December 1980, Military Review, a journal of the U.S. Army, carried a cover story titled "The New Mental Battlefield." In his quirky essay, Lieut. Colonel John B. Alexander wrote that "there are weapons systems that operate on the power of the mind and whose lethal capacity has already been demonstrated." He equated the first strategic breakthrough in defense E.S.P. with sole possession of nuclear weapons and urged the U.S. to step up its research in the field.

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"I know the Government's involved," says Physicist Russell Targ, co-author with Keith Harary of the forthcoming book *The Mind Race*. "I did the work," he contends. Because he was working with special clearances while at SRI International, a California research institute, Targ will not specify whether the Defense Department, the CIA or both funded his psychic research programs, but he maintains that there was a "multimillion-dollar" project, part of which focused on "remote viewing" experiments.

In one test, Targ went to Grant's Tomb in New York City and tried to transmit an image to a clairvoyant in California. The psychic described a high place with a view, which she said "makes me think of a restaurant or museum." Her vision, Targ argues, was remarkably accurate. On a visit to the U.S.S.R. in October, Targ found that the Soviets had replicated some of the experiments he and his colleagues had reported in scientific journals. Says Targ: "In the Soviet Union, psychic research is taken seriously at the highest levels."

Sighting submarines by clairvoyance? Sending signals with E.S.P." Representative Charlie Rose, a North Carolina Democrat on the House Select Committee on Intelligence, says it may be worth a look. "Some people think this is the work of the devil," says he. "Others think it may be the holy spirit. If the Soviets, as is evident, feel it is worthwhile, I am willing to spend a few bucks."

GRAPHIC: Illustration, no caption, ILLUSTRATION FOR TIME BY MICHAEL WITTE

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