

SUMMARY OF PRE-TRIAL INVESTIGATION TESTINOMY
IN NICKERSON CASE

Identification of Principal Characters:

Colonel John C. Nickerson, Chief of the Field Coordination Office,
Army Ballistic Missile Agency (ABMA)

Lt. Col. Lee James, Deputy Chief, Field Coordination Office, ABMA

Lt. Col. Guy Drewry, Assistant Chief

Capt. Jerry Ledford, Executive Officer

Walter Wiesman, Chief of the Orientation Branch of the Field
Coordination Office

Frank Moring, Assistant to Walter Wiesman

Willie Wilbanks, Administrative Assistant to Ledford

Jane Nelson, Secretary

(This constitutes the personnel of Colonel Nickerson's office who might
have any bearing on the case.)

Major General H. N. Toftoy, Commanding General, Redstone Arsenal

Brigadier General John Shinkle, Deputy Commander, Redstone Arsenal

Major General J. B. Medaris, Commanding General, ABMA

Brigadier General John Barkley, Deputy Commander, ABMA

Dr. Wehrner von Braun, Director, Development Operations Division,
ABMA - Head of the German Scientific Team that developed the V-1
and V-2 for Hitler at Peenemunde, now a United States citizen.

Dr. Ernst Stuhlinger, head of Research Laboratory, one of von Braun's
key men, now U. S. citizen. Stuhlinger is the scientist who gave the
press the story that if Jupiter is taken from the Army the German
scientific team will likely disintegrate and accept attractive offers
from private industry which they have up to this time rejected.

Pre-Trial Investigation Testimony Shows:

Nickerson was in Washington in November, 1946 when the Wilson Memorandum came out. He started immediately to write his notes or comments on this memorandum and went to Col. Nils Bengston, Chief of the ABMA Field Office with the Bureau of Ordnance in Washington, to get it typed. Bengston cautioned Nickerson about the document. Bengston even suggested Nickerson carry a "Secret" stamp with him and if he left copies with Congressmen to stamp them "Secret."

While in D. C., Nickerson also saw Col. William Prichard in the Pentagon and at the Diamond Ordnance Fuse Laboratory, and Nickerson asked him for two documents on adjustments between the services, being "Adjustment of Army-Air Force Differences" dated August 22 from Mr. Quarles to Mr. Wilson, and then there was one, same title, from Mr. Brucker to Mr. Wilson dated in September. Colonel Prichard had these copied (which the Army claims was improper), and stamped them classified. He then sent these to Nickerson by courier. Prichard says he did not know what Nickerson wanted with these documents, which Nickerson says is a true statement. Prichard told the investigators he gave these to Nickerson to be used in staff work. Prichard admits being present at the Diamond Ordnance Fuse Laboratory when Nickerson and Bengston were working on some notes. He thought it was a staff paper. On or about December 1 Nickerson returned from Washington to Redstone. He gave the first draft of his memorandum to Jane Nelson, a secretary in his Section, to type. He gave a draft to Frank Morring to correct.

On 3 December 1956 General Medaris held a staff meeting and laid down the law that there would be no discussion of Roles and Missions. Nickerson was not present at this meeting but got a report on it later in the day.

On 4 December 1956 Nickerson sent the original out to be reproduced. This was the first draft or the 12-page document. He had 25 copies made. The work order on this was signed by Willie Wilbanks of Nickerson's office. On 5 December Nickerson got 25 copies of the Quarles Service Readjustment Memorandum and the IRBM No. 2 paper (this set up ABMA) and bound them together. On 10 December 1956 he had reproduced 25 copies of his 14-page memorandum (which was the original draft) rewritten with an additional two pages of summary added. On 13 December 1956 he had reprinted 25 copies of the Brucker Service Readjustment Memorandum. He now has 25 copies of everything. On 27 December he obtained 15 copies of a 42-page document entitled "Considerations on the Wilson Memorandum," which, in reality, the 42-page document was made up of the Wilson Memorandum, the Quarles and Brucker Memorandums, and his own "Considerations" or comments on the Wilson Memorandum. The Brucker and Quarles Memorandums were simply supporting papers of his "Considerations" or comments. He now has

forty copies of the entire collection, or 42-page document. Wilbanks signed all work orders and says that Nickerson ordered all this work done. The stenographers agree they typed these documents. Nickerson or his assistants requested that the masters or original lithograph plates be returned to his office after reproduction. Only the work order of 27 December specifically states return of these masters.

Tyson runs the printing office and testified that oral caution was given him by Wilbanks or Ledford that these documents should be treated with care.

General Medaris had laid down the rule "No discussion of 'Roles and Missions'." Colonel Nickerson held little informal meetings among the people of his own Section and asked (Colonel James and Captain Ledford) who their Congressmen were and who could they get to help the Army to save the Jupiter Program. James admitted to the investigators he is the first man who brought up the name of Drew Pearson and suggested the possible advantage of a copy getting into the hands of Pearson. Actually, there were no plans formulated for a copy to be placed in Pearson's hands and no suggestions to this end. Shortly thereafter Colonel James went to Washington to brief Lt. General E. L. Cummings, Chief of Ordnance, and Lt. General James Gavin, Chief of Research and Development, Department of the Army, which Colonel Nickerson's office had done monthly for some time, as to what was going on in the Jupiter Program. Colonel James normally was given two days for this briefing assignment, but was given three days in D. C. on this particular trip. While in D. C., Col. James read in the paper that Drew Pearson was leaving town, so he called Pearson's office and asked if Pearson had left. His secretary told him no, but that Pearson and his assistant Jack Anderson were busy in conferences and to call back in five minutes. James did not call back but went to the Willard Hotel, bought an envelope, slit it open and wrapped it around the document and mailed it to Pearson. The document as mailed by James to Pearson consisted only of Mr. Wilson's original memorandum of November, 1956, which had been published in its entirety in the press, including the "New York Times," and Nickerson's original 12-page draft of his "Considerations on the Wilson Memorandum."

When Col. James first called Pearson's office, the secretary asked him what his business was and he said "Guided Missiles." James says he did not tell the secretary he was an Army Colonel.

When Col. James got back to Redstone, he implied to Nickerson that he had seen Pearson. James came to Redstone originally in July 1956. He felt from the beginning that Nickerson's office was a political office and was here to do political work, so he told the investigating officers. James says General Medaris had done nothing to create the impression this office was political; however, to Question No. 139 in the investigation report, James said that General Medaris often referred to Nickerson's office as his "State Department." James stated under oath that he had never read the document.

Col. Drewry read the document and said that he thought it was a poor document. When James was asked what he thought Drewry meant by this, he said he thought he meant it was poorly done and in poor taste. He later said he thought Drewry meant he felt the document should be classified.

In some places Col. James said he considered his contacting Pearson to be on an order from Nickerson and in other places he did not so consider it an order. (Actually Col. James was talked to by the investigators on four different occasions. The first couple of times he hedged and stalled, and the third time James virtually made a full and complete confession of his part in the whole affair and stated, in effect, that Nickerson should not be held responsible for his activities or connection with the office of Drew Pearson. Shortly after this, General Medaris called James in and apparently put the fear of God in him because on James' fourth and final appearance before the investigating officers, the story changed in that he made many contradictions of his prior testimony.)

Walter Wiesman was not at the first meeting that Nickerson had with his staff but he met with Colonel Nickerson and they talked about who should be drawn in to help try to effect a reconsideration on the part of Mr. Wilson. Wiesman went to Sheffield, Alabama to see William Hunt with Reynolds Metals. Hunt was cleared for "Secret" and represented one of the big four contractors on the Jupiter Program. Wiesman showed Hunt the Wilson Memorandum and Nickerson's "Considerations" and Hunt wanted to keep the paper, so Wiesman left these with him.

Wiesman organized a meeting at the Russel Erskine Hotel in Huntsville with Senators Lister Hill, John Sparkman and Congressman Bob Jones of the Eighth Alabama District, in which Redstone is located. Nickerson heard the meeting was going to be held and asked to attend. Nickerson appeared and gave out approximately sixteen copies. Frank Moring was at this meeting. The Third Army Inspector General was very interested in knowing what was discussed at this meeting. Nickerson, Wiesman and Moring all told the investigators that little, if anything, was discussed on "Roles and Missions" but the economic impact on Huntsville if the Jupiter Program was lost.

Wilbanks knows nothing about the contents of the documents, but knows all about the reproduction of them. Wilbanks mailed the two packages to Eric Bergaust, editor of "Rockets and Missiles Magazine."

Jane Nelson did a lot of typing on these documents. She wrote the letter of transmittal to Bergaust, and it was in her steno book that the Inspector General found the notes on this letter or learned of the letter for the first time. (This letter is incriminating.)

Ledford warned Nickerson that the document was dangerous in that it was critical of higher authority. It was not dangerous insofar as its being

classified, according to Ledford. Does not recall Pearson's name ever being brought up in any meeting. Ledford told Nickerson that he, Nickerson, would no longer be in the Army if he was found with this document.

Drewry felt the paper was dis-jointed. He suggested the Ordnance Association as a good medium of distribution. He claims that he did not know what the document was going to be used for.