

E3

December 24, 2017

The fact that it is Christmas Eve is technically an accident, but the Christmas traditions of peace and salvation were never more desirable than now.

I am taking pen to paper. A novel idea in this high tech era, but we are under communications blackout in preparation for launch in two hours. I also feel the need to put this story down. I figure if you are seeing this in electronic format, someone (or something) found it and transcribed it. Regardless of the outcome, I won't be putting this on a computer.

I belong to an organization called the World Underground (WU), which I hope you've never heard of. After the first nuclear bomb test (July 16, 1945 in New Mexico for you history buffs) the Allies realized they had a monster on their hands (i.e. possible nuclear war) and started digging. Massive bunkers were built in four locations with a history of seismic activity. Two are in North America and the other two are in Europe. I've only ever seen two and I have no idea where the others are.

Self-containment, self-sufficiency and secrecy were the driving thoughts for the WU. By the 1950s the structures were in place and in the 1960s, recruiting began to gather people with the right skills and attitudes to be part of the WU. Our community was to be the survival cross section group of humanity in the case of nuclear annihilation. In the 1970s, when I was 17, I officially died, and left my life behind. I was a brainiac in the emerging microprocessor field. At first it was tough, but the work was so engrossing that I adjusted well. Plus, it's not like we didn't get out. My year in France was amazing – But this is not a memoir.

The Copperheads are what is important. In the 1950s there was an increase in UFO sightings around the Nevada and New Mexico area. This was attributed to fanciful imaginations and increased air traffic globally. However, the Statistics group of the WU was not convinced, so a WU special team spent time examining this. (Paranoia about the Soviet Union was super high so no anomalies were ignored.)

Much to the WU's surprise, our investigative team retrieved a sample of an alien body from a crash site in Ely, Nevada and brought it back to the bunker. Our secrecy had been preserved, but we had a quandary. We had proof of alien life, but no idea what to do about it. The WU's thought process was "if these creatures can travel between planets and stars, the estimated energy from their propulsion systems could vaporize us in a day." Very little exists in the way of alien artifacts. From what we can gather, the material self-destructs or is cleaned up by the Copperheads themselves. Much to my annoyance, no X-Files style of reverse engineering of alien tech has ever been possible.

By the way, the aliens are called Copperheads because we think they have a copper-based blood/circulatory system and we think they have metallic shells (no idea if it's natural or an add-on), kind of like turtles. This is all based on the one sample as we've never seen one alive. We infer their activities from UFO sightings and alleged crashes.

The WU felt that, considering the aliens have worked so hard to conceal themselves,

1. They were on Earth because they were tourists -- something like eco-tourists wanting to leave a small footprint
2. Were doing research using a duck-blind approach, or
3. Were scouting for future colonization.

All three concepts have a creepiness factor to them, but the WU decided that watching the watchers would yield more information than any overt activities.

There is pre-1950s data that might indicate they were on Earth far earlier, but the data tells us that it was after the Trinity bomb, we earthlings really caught their attention.

My job, that started back in the 70s, was to leverage and advance computing technology and to tap into existing data to see if we could learn more about the Copperheads. As the Earth became more and more covered with cameras, broadcasts and surrounded by satellites, we wondered if the Copperheads had to improve how they hid. The big prize of course was figuring out if they had a mothership or some indication of where their home world was.

In 2014 we were distracted by Ebola. It burst into a crisis in west Africa and the WU was concerned on two levels. The world response was sluggish and the ability for the virus to infect and kill health care workers was nasty. The WU's inherent paranoia about world-ending events drew its attention to Ebola. Ironically, despite being a secret organization to preserve humanity, no one in the WU actually wanted to be the last humans standing.

During the Ebola crisis, we recorded an increase in Copperhead style UFO sightings in west Africa, which was not a traditional place for them to visit. We started to look more at the data because, due to the chaos of Ebola, we did not trust it.

Then in mid-2015, just when Ebola itself seemed to be under control, E2 emerged. E2 was Ebola transmitted cold-style through respiratory illness. Only a handful of people had resistance to this and a whole new crisis in west Africa erupted. With it being far easier to transmit the disease, air travel was restricted. Once again we recorded a spike in Copperhead activity. What made the relentless health crisis in Africa of interest to the Copperheads?

The WU's microbiology and virology group brought hypochondria and paranoia together in an intense way, but that didn't stop them from obtaining and analyzing a sample of E2. Their conclusion was that it had not evolved spontaneously, it had been helped. During Ebola, sections of Africa were tightly cordoned off. Two E2 samples from two isolated sections of Africa were exactly the same. Spontaneous mutation was never that tidy. Our microbiologists were convinced E2 had been modified in a lab.

Making things really crazy was the fact that someone (our intel suggested mercenaries out of Saudi Arabia) dropped off E2 infected dead bodies into the heart of the so-called Islamic State conflict in Syria and Iraq. These bright bulbs who thought that up did not realize that E2 is a non-discriminatory virus infecting anyone regardless of who they fight for.

So, as our biology groups tackled the E2 virus, the technology group convinced the WU leadership that we had to look directly for the connection between the Copperheads and E2. The coincidence of their activity and Ebola and E2 was too unlikely not to investigate. The entire organization was starting to worry our bunker would not be used to preserve humanity from nuclear war, but rather a pandemic.

My team had built thousands of micro-drones which were packed with sensors and the ability to self-dissolve in the case of malfunction. If caught, they would not last long and leave no useful trace. We wanted to deploy these in west Africa to see if we could catch a glimpse of what the Copperheads were up to. I personally felt they were responsible, but I had no evidence. By the time we had our network of hidden surveillance drones in place, the world panic around E2 was so great that west Africa had been virtually abandoned and no one was watching, except us.

When E3 emerged, had we not caught the footage on our own equipment, we would have likely disbelieved the recordings. The last of what we assumed were E2 infected patients were sliding into comas. Once their core temperatures and pulses dropped to 32 C and 30 bpm, they showed signs of a brain haemorrhage. Shortly after, they would get up and start walking as if in a trance. They shuffled seemingly without effort to the nearest settlement and started attacking people, many of whom were already sick, and biting off chunks of their flesh.

E3 patients weren't reanimated corpses or anything, but even if we could magically cure the virus, the various organs were so calcified, that survival was virtually zero. Viruses, like all living things, look for a way to survive through passing genes. However, sending "zombies" to go chomp on other people seemed more like psychological warfare than an effective means to transmit disease. These poor people now wandering the African landscape were right out of our worst horror movie induced nightmares.

We coordinated with a WU unit in Europe to obtain a sample of an E3 patient – all done with robots and remote vehicles. It was a challenging bit of lab work. We wanted to see what E3 patients were made of, and we had antiviral tests we wanted to perform. This was insanely overt for the WU, but we were quite convinced if the E3 virus didn't kill us all, the subsequent panic would.

Over the years, one of the thought problems about the Copperheads was "What did they eat? Did they bring all the food they needed with them? How long would that last?"

Our cameras once again found out. After all these years it was almost a thrill to see a Copperhead in plain view. They did look like metallic turtles with six legs. Four were for locomotion and the middle two look like tool handlers. However, the context of this discovery removed any excitement – the Copperheads started eating the E3 patients. Only our cameras were covering this as the Copperheads started in the most abandoned part of Africa. To bring our collective distress to the maximum, after eating two or three E3 patients, the Copperheads gave birth. Baby Copperheads are not cute. But they are hungry.

It had taken them a long time to reveal it, but clearly colonization was the Copperheads' goal. One of the many imponderable questions revolved around whether they knew we were watching. Did they see our drones? Did they not care? If they knew we were watching, they had no fear or assumed they had no reason to fear us.

So, the WU – the think tank bunker meant to preserve mankind from a self-inflicted demise – now faced an existential dilemma. Attempt a counterattack or stay hidden and hope for the best. Collectively, the feeling was that we could not stand by and do nothing. We activated our backup bunkers and prepared to abandon what had been home for decades. At the same time, we prepared thousands of drones with a special antiviral spray.

We had a double feint in mind. The drones would deploy an anti-viral that might cure E3 patients, only of course to let them die naturally and rapidly. This was the least likely outcome. The anti-viral was more likely to work on some E2 patients prior to succumbing to E3. Our hope is that the Copperheads would assume we were trying to save people. However, within the anti-viral was a compound designed to spoil and/or poison the Copperheads' food supply. Again, huge assumptions were made here. Specifically had we inferred correctly from our 1950s era Copperhead sample what their nutritional needs were? The follow-on assumption was that the compounds that E3 patients had developed were the food source.

Ideally the Copperheads would eat E3 patients, and either derive no nutrition or, better yet, die from food poisoning. Alien salmonella if you will.

Look at the time. Five minutes to launch. Soon thousands of drones from all four WU bunkers will emerge and do their work. Despite our intricate network of launch bays, we assume the Copperheads will figure out where we are.

In a couple of hours it will also be Christmas Day. The WU is multi-faith, but I remember the traditions of my childhood. I remember wanting that minicomputer kit from *Popular Electronics*. My parents thought I was such a nerd. Now for Christmas I want to live. Or as Demosthenes observed in about 340 BC, I'd like to fight, then run away so I can fight another day.

Historian Notes. Date: 2071-12-24

Document transcribed from hand-written notes found in the North American bunker #1, 2070-09-18. Great debate about authenticity. A prank? "E3" not confirmed by independent sources. No other similar bunkers have been found in North America or Europe. Copperheads not confirmed by independent sources. (Although sufficient material to drive speculation and conspiracy theories.) Anti-viral drones were confirmed to have existed. Insufficient record-keeping to derive exact source of drones. Several governments of the day claimed ownership. This document has inspired incredible discussion about the events of the late teens and 2020s. More cross referencing required for authentication.