

Cheney's 'Spoon-Benders' Pushing Nuclear Armageddon

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Sometime in late 1980, then-Col. Paul E. Valley, the Commander of the 7th Psychological Operations Group, United States Army Reserve, Presidio of San Francisco, Calif., co-authored a discussion paper, which received wide and controversial attention within the U.S. military, particularly within the Special Operations community. The paper was titled "From PSYOP to MindWar: The Psychology of Victory," and it presented a Nietzschean scheme for waging perpetual psychological warfare against friend and enemy populations alike, and even against the American people.

The "MindWar" paper was provoked by an article by Lt. Col. John Alexander, which appeared in the December 1980 edition of *Military Review*, advocating the introduction of ESP (extra-sensory perception), "tele-pathic behavior modification," para-psychology, psychokinesis ("mind over matter"), remote viewing, out of body experiences, and other New Age and occult practices into U.S. military intelligence. Alexander's paper was titled "The New Mental Battlefield: Beam Me Up, Spock."

But the subsequent paper co-authored by Valley went way beyond ESP and the other paranormal techniques advocated by Alexander: "Strategic MindWar must begin the moment war is considered to be inevitable," the document stated. "It must seek out the attention of the enemy nation through every available medium, and it must strike at the nation's potential soldiers *before* they put on their uniforms. It is in their homes and their communities that they are most vulnerable to MindWar. . . .

"To this end," Valley and co-author continued, "MindWar must be strategic in emphasis, with tactical applications playing a reinforcing, supplementary role. In its strategic context, MindWar must reach out to friends, enemies,

and neutrals alike across the globe—neither through primitive 'battlefield' leaflets and loudspeakers of PSYOP nor through the weak, imprecise, and narrow effort of psychotronics—but through the media possessed by the United States which have the capabilities to reach virtually all people on the face of the Earth. These media are, of course the *electronic* media—television and radio. State of the art developments in satellite communication, video recording techniques, and laser and optical transmission of broadcasts make possible a penetration of the minds of the world such as would have been inconceivable just a few years ago. Like the sword Excalibur [King Arthur's magical sword—ed.], we have but to reach out and



Col. John B. Alexander (right), with Hal Puthoff. Alexander was one of the first to advocate the use of ESP, "tele-pathic behavior modification," para-psychology, and other New Age and occult practices into U.S. military intelligence.

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Uri Geller Press Pictures

Uri Geller, the legendary Israeli "spoon-bender," worked for U.S. intelligence in the 1980s, and has now reportedly been brought back.

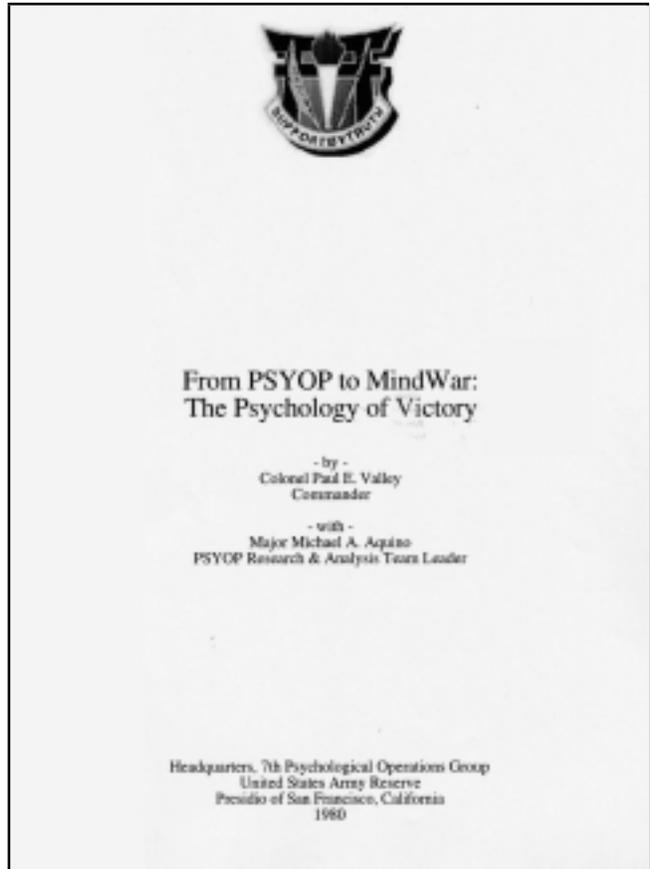
seize this tool; and it can transform the world for us if we have the courage and the integrity to enhance civilization with it. If we do not accept Excalibur, then we relinquish our ability to inspire foreign cultures with our morality. If they can then desire moralities unsatisfactory to us, we have no choice but to fight them on a more brutish level.

"MindWar must target *all* participants to be effective. It must not only weaken the enemy; it must strengthen the United States. It strengthens the United States by denying enemy propaganda access to our people, and by explaining and emphasizing to our people the rationale for our national interest in a specific war."

Leaving nothing to the imagination, the document concluded by emphasizing that MindWar should employ subliminal brainwashing technologies, and weapons that directly attack the targetted population's central nervous system and brain functioning: "There are some purely natural conditions under which minds may become more or less receptive to ideas, and MindWar should take full advantage of such phenomena as atmospheric electromagnetic activity, air ionization, and extremely low frequency waves," the paper concluded.

The "MindWar" paper was disturbing, for reasons beyond its fascist and occultist content. For one thing, Colonel Vallely's co-author was a PSYOP Research & Analysis Team Leader named Maj. Michael A. Aquino. Five years before the circulation of the MindWar paper, Special Forces Reserve officer Aquino had founded the Temple of Set, a Satanic organization which was the successor to Anton Szandor LeVay's Church of Satan. Aquino would soon be grabbing headlines, which persisted throughout the 1980s, as a leading suspect in a nationwide Satanic pedophile ring, that particularly targetted daycare centers on such military bases as Fort Bragg and the Presidio (see article, p. 21).

Furthermore, Vallely and Aquino's MindWar scheme is remarkably similar to the Total Information Awareness (TIA)



This document was co-authored by then-Col. Paul Vallely and the Satanist Maj. Michael Aquino in 1980, a seminal document in the bid for influence by the "spoon-benders" in the U.S. military.

program launched by the Donald Rumsfeld Pentagon, under the direction of Irangate figure Adm. John Poindexter. Ostensibly, the Total Information Awareness global propaganda and mega-data-mining plan was scrapped after a series of negative news stories, but Pentagon sources have reported that the program was merely "taken into a black box."

Indeed, on Aug. 16, 2005, *The New York Times*'s Philip Shenon revealed that a super-secret Pentagon "special action program" called Able Danger had tracked Mohammed Atta and three of the other Sept. 11, 2001 hijackers a year *prior* to the attacks; but Pentagon lawyers with the Special Operations Command refused to allow the information to be shared with the FBI, for fear of exposing the data-mining program to any public scrutiny. The *Times* learned of Able Danger from Lt. Col. Anthony Schaffer, who was the program's liaison to the Defense Intelligence Agency at the time.

'Nuke Iran!'

Colonel Vallely's association with Aquino did little to stall the former's military career advancement. A West Point graduate, Vallely retired in 1991 as deputy commanding gen-

eral of the U.S. Army of the Pacific. From 1982-86, he headed the 351st Civil Affairs Command, placing him in charge of all Special Forces, Psychological Warfare, and Civil Affairs Military units in the Western United States and Hawaii.

Today, he is practicing what he and Satanist Aquino preached in the MindWar paper, and is one of the leading propaganda assets in Vice President Dick Cheney's push for military confrontation with Iran—one that could see the United States carry out the first pre-emptive nuclear attack in history.

General Valley, now retired from the military, is a senior military commentator for Rupert Murdoch's shrill Fox TV News; is a "client" of Benador Associates, the premier public relations firm for the neo-conservative cabal in Washington; is the Military Committee chairman for Frank Gaffney's neocon Center for Strategic Policy; and is the co-founder, along with Gen. Thomas McInerney (USAF-ret.), another Benador client, of the Iran Policy Committee. IPC is yet another neocon front group that: 1) promotes the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK), a group on the State Department's list of International Terrorist Organizations (for assassinating a number of U.S. military officers in Iran); and 2) demands U.S. military action to impose "regime change" in Tehran, through such measures as a massive bombing campaign against Iran's purported secret nuclear weapons labs, and a U.S. Naval blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. Recently General Valley co-authored a book with General McInerney, titled *Endgame—Blueprint for Victory for Winning the War on Terror*, which borrows, philosophically, from his and Aquino's original MindWar rant (see interview with Valley on p. 13).

The 'Jedi Warriors'

General Valley, Colonel Alexander, and Lt. Colonel Aquino (ret.) are but three leading figures within the Special Operations community, who have promoted the application of New Age and outright Satanic practices to the art of war, conducting experimental programs aimed at creating a Nietzschean "Übermensch warrior."

In preparation for this article, *EIR* has interviewed several senior retired military and intelligence officers, who have identified, from their own personal experiences, a number of other leading military officers who promoted these efforts and funnelled massive amounts of Pentagon money into "black programs," testing the military applications of a whole range of bizarre "non-lethal" techniques and technologies. Some of the top-secret programs funded by taxpayer dollars over the past 25 years betray a significant degree of outright "spoon-bending" lunacy. Others lead directly to the doorsteps of Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib military detention centers, where prisoners have been turned into human guinea pigs for experimental torture techniques, drawn from the same New Age bag of tricks.

And *The New Yorker* magazine investigative journalist

Seymour Hersh, in a Jan. 24-31, 2005 article on "The Coming Wars," mooted that the Special Forces "black programs" may now have ventured into the field of "pseudo-gang warfare," in which counterinsurgency methods blur with insurgency.

Quoting from a September 2003 *San Francisco Chronicle* article by Naval Postgraduate School defense analyst and Pentagon counterinsurgency advisor John Arquilla, Hersh hinted that U.S. Special Forces units were being unleashed to create their own terrorist "pseudo gangs" to more easily infiltrate terrorist groups like al-Qaeda. Arquilla wrote: "When conventional military operations and bombing failed to defeat the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya in the 1950s, the British formed teams of friendly Kikuyu tribesmen who went about pretending to be terrorists. These 'pseudo gangs,' as they were called, swiftly threw the Mau Mau on the defensive, either by befriending and then ambushing bands of fighters or by guiding bombers to the terrorists' camps. What worked in Kenya a half-century ago has a wonderful chance of undermining trust and recruitment among today's terror networks. Forming new pseudo gangs should not be difficult."

Arquilla added, for good measure: "If a confused young man from Marin County can join up with al-Qaeda [a reference to John Walker Lindh, the so-called American Taliban—ed.], think what professional operatives might do."

The 'Gang of Four'

Four of the names most often cited as promoters of programs like the "Goat Lab," the "Jedi Warriors," "Grill Flame," "Task Force Delta," and the "First Earth Battalion," have held top posts within the military intelligence and Special Operations commands:

Gen. Albert Stubblebine III was the head of U.S. Army Intelligence, INSCOM (Intelligence and Security Command), from 1981-84, during which time he launched a series of secret projects at Fort Meade, Md., involving remote viewing and other occult practices. General Stubblebine was, perhaps, the U.S. Army's most senior and loudest advocate of the full gamut of New Age warfare.



Gen. Albert Stubblebine III

Gen. Peter Schoomaker, the current U.S. Army Chief of Staff, was Commanding General of the Joint Special Operations Command (1994-96), Commander of the United States Army Special Operations Command (1996-97), and Commander in Chief of the United States Special Operations Command (1997-2000). Accord-



U.S. Army/Sgt. Carmen L. Burgess

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker has allegedly created a think-tank devoted to expanding the application of bizarre occult and paranormal operations throughout the Army.



benning.army.mil

Gen. Wayne A. Downing applied MindWar techniques during the invasion of Panama, as Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Special Operations Command.

ing to a well-researched book exposing the New Age penetration of the U.S. military, *The Men Who Stare at Goats*, by Jon Ronson (Simon & Schuster, New York, 2004), General Schoomaker has created a think-tank, under the sponsorship of the COS office, to expand the application of these bizarre occult and para-normal operations throughout the U.S. Army, as his contribution to President George W. Bush's Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).

Gen. Wayne Downing also was the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Special Operations Command, and earlier directed all special operations during the December 1989 invasion of Panama, when some of the MindWar techniques were used, during the siege of the Vatican compound where Gen. Manuel Noriega had taken refuge. Following the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Downing was named National Director and Deputy National Security Advisor for Combatting Terrorism in the Bush-Cheney White House, a post he held until June 2002.

According to military sources, General Downing left the White House as the result of a conflict with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, over plans for the invasion of Iraq. Downing had argued that Saddam Hussein could be overthrown by a massive "shock and awe" bombing campaign, followed by an invasion by a force of no more than 25,000 Special Forces troops. The "Downing Plan" was rejected by the Chiefs as "sheer madness," according to one senior military source familiar with the events.

Gen. William "Jerry" Boykin was the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, N.C., from 1998-2000. Prior to that, he was the Commander of the elite counter-terror unit, Delta Force, from 1992-95. He was, in that capacity, in charge of the Special Forces units in Mogadishu, Somalia, during the famous 1993 "Black Hawk Down" incident, in which a number of Special Forces soldiers were beaten to death by warlords, and dragged through the streets of the

city. Here, some of Lt. Col. John Alexander's non-lethal systems, including "Sticky Foam," were directly put to the combat test—and failed. From March 2000 until June 2003, General Boykin headed the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center. He was then named Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, a post he still holds. According to *The New Yorker* piece by Hersh, Boykin and his immediate boss, Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence Stephen Cambone, are directly in charge of the Special Operations search-and-kill squads touted by John Arquilla in his pseudo-gang promo.

Shortly after his appointment to the Deputy Undersecretary position, General Boykin drew fire, for remarks he delivered—in uniform—at a fundamentalist Christian church, in which he smeared Islam as a "Satanic" religion, and characterized the U.S. invasion of Iraq as a religious "crusade." He also said that "God had placed George W. Bush" into the Presidency, provoking serious debates about his own sanity and a Pentagon Inspector General's Office probe.

First Earth Battalion—Where It All Began

According to author Jon Ronson, in 1977, Lt. Col. Jim Channon, a Vietnam War combat veteran, wrote a letter to Lt. Gen. Walter Kerwin, then the U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff, proposing a fact-finding mission to unearth ways for the U.S. military to become more "cunning." Channon was given an open-ended assignment, a small Pentagon budget, and spent the next two years, by his own accounts, exploring the depths of the New Age movement, seeking military applications. Channon visited over 150 New Age facilities during his travels, with such countercultural names as: Gentle Wind, Integral Chuan Institute, Dayspring, Inc., The Center of Release and Integration, Postural Integration Reichian Rebirthing, the New Age Awareness Fair, Beyond Jogging, Aikido with Ki, the Biofeedback Center of Berkeley, and the Esalen Institute.



jimchannon.com

Lt. Col. Jim Channon was one of the first proponents of New Age mind-war in the military, starting in the late 1970s.

Channon particularly spent a good deal of time training under Michael Murphy, the co-founder of Esalen, which was the leading West Coast New Age psychological experimentation center, testing a wide array of mind-control methods, many involving the use of psychotropic drugs. Cultist mass murderer Charles Manson spent Aug. 5, 1969 at Esalen, just four days before he unleashed the “Helter Skelter” murder spree, for which he is still serving a lifetime jail sentence. Manson had been tracked, from his years in state prison, by military psychologists, who were studying behavioral patterns of what they dubbed the “pathologically violent five percent.”

In 1979, Lt. Colonel Channon presented his findings to the Army brass in a 125-page document, complete with slides, called “The First Earth Battalion.” While the document was laced with New Age vocabulary (“The First Earth is not mission oriented, it is potential oriented. That means we shall continue to look everywhere to find non-destructive methods of control.”), Channon did propose an array of non-lethal techniques that would be soon adopted by the military, including the use of atonal noises as a form of combat psychological warfare, oriental martial arts and spiritualist instruction, and widespread experimentation with psychoelectronics and other means of debilitating enemy forces.

Channon’s First Earth Battalion slide show was brought to General Stubblebine, the head of INSCOM, by Colonel Alexander, the author of the *Military Review* article on “The New Mental Battlefield,” and, by 1981, Stubblebine established a secret “psychic spies unit” at Fort Meade, to test out such dubious techniques as remote viewing.

Two years later, General Stubblebine travelled to Fort Bragg, to pitch the Channon/Alexander program to the top leadership of the Special Operations community. By now,

Stubblebine was convinced that, with the application of the right “mind over matter” techniques, he could personally walk through walls. As of this writing, he has not yet apparently succeeded. The Fort Bragg session, as he would later recount it to author Ronson, was a fiasco, and no action was taken to implement his program—or so Stubblebine thought.

In reality, Fort Bragg, by 1978, was already a hotbed of mind-war experimentation. Among the programs carried out at remote corners of the sprawling special operations base: the Goat Lab, where a team of New Age-trained Special Forces soldiers attempted to burst the hearts of goats, in an adjacent holding pen, through the power of psychic concentration. Veterinarians working on the base were horrified that Special Forces planes were airlifting goats up from Central America, without going through the normal Customs inspections. The goats were used in the training of combat medics. The goats would be shot, their limbs would be amputated, and, on some occasions, they were “de-bleated” by having their tongues cut out or their throats slashed. Then, they were subjected to the Goat Lab psychic warfare tests.

Keying off of Channon’s blueprint, a Special Operations experimental team, dubbed “Jedi Warriors,” after the Star Wars craze, were trained in a wide array of Eastern oriental martial arts and meditation techniques, combined with super-strenuous physical training programs. Outside “experts” like Dr. Jim Hardt, were brought in to train the “Jedi Warriors” to heighten their mental telepathy skills through Zen. Following Jim Channon’s First Earth Battalion recipe, Stuart Heller, a New Age psychologist, who gave classes in stress control to corporate executives and officials at NASA, was brought in to provide similar schooling to the commandos. Channon had been introduced to Heller by Marilyn Ferguson, the author of the 1980 book *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, which peddled a New Age version of H.G. Wells’s original *Open Conspiracy* concept of mass social control and cultural paradigm-shifts.

Not all the instructors of the “Jedi Warriors” were counter-culture psychologists. Michael Echanis, a Green Beret who was badly wounded in Vietnam, but later developed advanced martial arts skills, was brought in to train the “Jedi” in Hwa Rang Do, a combat technique that emphasized “invisibility.” Echanis would be killed in 1978 in Nicaragua, while working as a mercenary for the regime of Anastasio Somoza. He had been the martial arts editor of *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, a well-known hiring hall for ex-soldiers and wanna-be’s, seeking their fortunes as mercenaries.

By 1983, between the INSCOM program and the black box efforts at Fort Bragg, a fairly extensive network of military “spoon-benders” had been assembled, to the point that Task Force Delta was created, to stage quarterly meetings of as many as 300 military occult practitioners, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Col. Frank Burns launched Meta Network,

one of the first “chat rooms” run through the DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) computer networking system, that would ultimately evolve into the internet.

The scheme to create a breed of Nietzschean “super soldiers” employed some very far-out characters, like the Israeli “spoon-bender” Uri Geller, a one-time stage magician, who was brought into the U.S. intelligence community under the original patronage of Dr. Andrija Puharich, a doctor who had been conducting work on parapsychology and telepathy for the U.S. Army’s Psychological Warfare Division, since the 1950s. Dr. Puharich ran the Round Table Foundation of Electrobiolgy, which experimented with the manipulation of brain waves. He worked closely with Warren S. McCulloch, one of the founders of Cybernetics, and with the British intelligence counterculture guru, Aldous Huxley.

Wolfowitz Peddles Non-Lethal Warfare

According to author Ronson, in an October 2001 interview in London, Uri Geller confided to him that he had been “called back” to work for the U.S. government, immediately after the Sept. 11 attacks. It seems that the Bush Administration decided that the “psychic spies” could play a productive role in the hunt for Osama bin Laden, and in efforts to prevent a replay of the terror attacks on New York and Washington.

In fact, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz had been a big advocate of some of Alexander and Channon’s ideas, while serving as the chief policy advisor to then-Defense Secretary Dick Cheney in the George Herbert Walker Bush Pentagon. On March 10, 1991, Wolfowitz wrote a memo to Cheney, “Do We Need a Non-Lethal Defense Initiative?” in which he wrote, “A U.S. lead in non-lethal technologies will increase our options and reinforce our position in the post-Cold War world.” While Wolfowitz apparently made no mention of the more bizarre practices promoted by Colonel Alexander, the guru of the non-lethal weaponry campaign, at the time of Wolfowitz’s memo, Alexander had retired from active duty, and had been named head of the Non-Lethal Weapons Program at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

In 1990, Colonel Alexander had also come out with a book, *The Warrior’s Edge*, in which he promoted a variety of unconventional methods to promote “human excellence and optimum performance” among soldiers, based on a course he taught in 1983 called Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). Among the students in that course were then-Senator and later Vice President Albert Gore, Gen. Max Thurman, and General Stubblebine. By his own accounts, Alexander and Gore became close friends in 1983, and remain so today.

Colonel Alexander wrote that the goal of *The Warrior’s Edge* was to “unlock the door to the extraordinary human



DoD/Helene C. Stikkel

Paul Wolfowitz in 2002 as Deputy Secretary of Defense was a big advocate of the MindWar idea championed by Lt. Col. John Alexander.

potentials inherent in each of us. To do this, we, like governments around the world, must take a fresh look at non-traditional methods of affecting reality. We must raise human consciousness of the potential power of the individual body/mind system—the power to manipulate reality. We must be willing to retake control of our past, present, and ultimately, our future.”

Uri Geller was not the only “psychic warrior” called back to government service after 9/11. Jim Channon, the original First Earth Battalion New Age super-soldier, according to author Ronson, began holding a series of meetings in early 2004 with the new Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Pete Schoomaker. Schoomaker had been commander of Special Forces at Fort Bragg when the “Goat Lab” and “Jedi Warrior” programs were under way. Ronson wrote that “The rumor was that General Schoomaker was considering bringing Jim back from retirement to create, or contribute to, a new and secret think-tank, designed to encourage the army to take their minds further and further outside the mainstream.” Ronson described it as a revival of Task Force Delta. Ronson soon received an e-mail from Channon, confirming the rumor, and explaining that the think-tank idea had been floated “because

Rumsfeld has now openly asked for creative input on the war on terrorism . . . mmmm.” Channon elaborated:

“The Army has requested my services to teach the most highly selected Majors. The First Earth Battalion is the teaching exemplar of choice. I have done that in the presence of General Pete Schoomaker. . . . I am in contact with players who are or have recently been in Afghanistan and Iraq. I have sent in exit strategy plans based on Earth Battalion ideas. I talk weekly with a member of a stress control battalion in Iraq who carries the manual and uses it to inform his teammates of their potential service contributions. . . .”

Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib . . . and al-Qa’im

The International Committee of the Red Cross has published a series of studies and sponsored several international conventions, to evaluate just how “non-lethal” the non-lethal technologies are that have been promoted by Alexander, Channon, and their ilk. According to a 1998 ICRC presentation before the European Parliament, non-lethal weapons are simply defined as weapons with a less-than 25% fatality rate. Such now widely used non-lethal weapons as lasers, extremely low frequency (ELF) weapons, and various chemical, biological, and audio stun weapons, can cause permanent damage, such as blindness, deafness, and destruction of gastrointestinal systems, which, the ICRC insists, require serious study and a new set of international treaties and conventions.

Indeed, according to both Ronson and *The New Yorker* writer Jane Mayer, many of the torture techniques employed at Guantanamo Bay, at Abu Ghraib, and at such less-well-known locales as al-Qa’im near the Syrian border in Iraq, are based on Channon and Alexander’s non-lethal schemes, but with lethal consequences in some cases.

Ronson confirmed that a facility at al-Qa’im was conducting “interrogations” of captured Iraqi insurgents, after playing, non-stop, for days at a time, the theme song from Barney the Purple Dinosaur, “I Love You.” Ronson is convinced that the music was a cover for subliminal frequencies, very high- or very low-frequency sounds that affect brain functioning, to break prisoners’ resistance. The prisoners were kept in metal shipping containers in the scorching sun, blindfolded and in crouching positions, surrounded by barbed wire, with the music (and subliminals) blaring.

In an article published in the July 11-18, 2005 issue of *The New Yorker*, Mayer revealed that Special Forces psychologists from the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape

(SERE) program at the JFK Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg had been brought to Guantanamo Bay, to oversee interrogation strategies. The SERE psychologists formed a core of the Behavioral Science Consultation Teams (BSCT, or “Biscuits”) that “reverse engineered” the techniques that were used on Special Forces soldiers, to train them to survive enemy torture/interrogations, as part of the advanced special warfare program at Fort Bragg.

Jim Channon confirmed, in another e-mail exchange with author Ronson, that many of the ideas adopted by the Army Intelligence interrogators at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and al-Qa’im came right out of his First Earth Battalion blueprint.

‘Living Embodiment’ of First Earth Battalion

At one point in his probe of the military’s spoon-benders, author Jon Ronson asked Stuart Heller, the friend of Marilyn Ferguson and Jim Channon, if he could name one soldier who was “the living embodiment” of the First Earth Battalion. Without a second thought, Heller replied: “Bert Rodriguez.” “Bert’s one of the most spiritual guys I’ve ever met,” Heller told Ronson. “No. Spiritual is the wrong word. He’s occultic. He’s like a walking embodiment of death. He can stop you at a distance. He can influence physical events just with his mind. If he catches your attention he can stop you without touching you.”

As Jon Ronson reported, “In April 2001, Bert Rodriguez took on a new student. His name was Ziad Jarrah. Ziad just turned up at the US 1 Fitness Center one day and said he had heard that Bert was good. Why Ziad chose Bert, of all the martial arts instructors scattered around the Florida shoreline, is a matter of speculation. Maybe Bert’s uniquely occultic reputation preceded him, or perhaps it was Bert’s military connections. Plus, Bert had once taught the head of security for a Saudi prince. Maybe that was it.”

Ziad Jarrah presented himself as a Lebanese businessman, who travelled a great deal and wanted to protect himself. “I liked Ziad a lot,” Rodriguez later told Ronson. “He was very humble, very quiet. He was in good shape. Very diligent.” Rodriguez taught Jarrah “the choke hold and the kamikaze spirit. You need a code you’d die for, a do-or-die desire.” Rodriguez added, “Ziad was like Luke Skywalker. You know when Luke walks the invisible path? You have to believe it’s there. And if you do believe it it *is* there. Yeah, Ziad believed it. He was like Luke Skywalker.”

Rodriguez trained Ziad Jarrah for six months, and gave him copies of several knife-fighting books he had written. Jarrah shared them with a friend, Marwan al-Shehhi, who boarded with him at the Panther Motel and Apartments in Deerfield Beach, Fla.

On Sept. 11, 2001, Ziad Jarrah took control of United Airlines flight 93, and crashed it in a field in Pennsylvania. Marwan al-Shehhi commandeered United Airlines flight 175 and crashed it into the South Tower of the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan.

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