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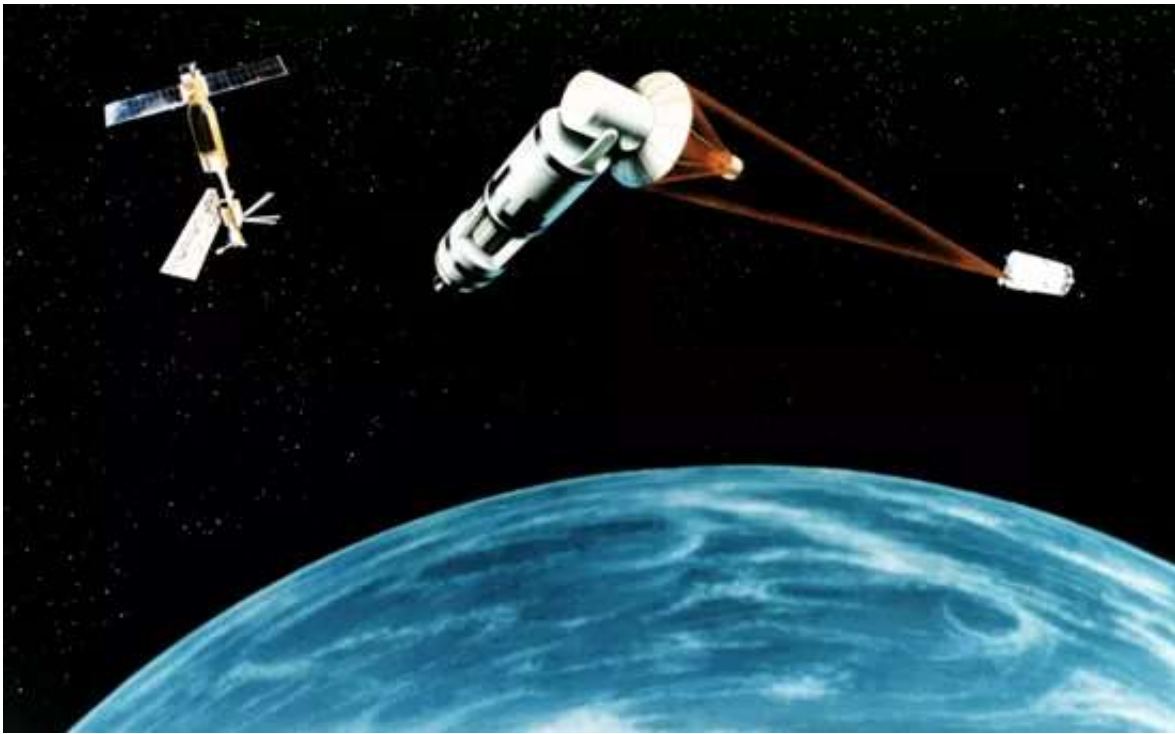
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**Mysterious SDI defense program deaths beg frightening question – how far will a government go to protect its secrets?**

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## The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program – aka the “Star Wars Project”



The *Strategic Defense Initiative* (SDI) program, popularly known as the “Star Wars project”, was first proposed by United States President Ronald Reagan in 1983 (and was likely conceived a few years prior to that). Its stated mission was simple: create a space-based system to protect the United States and its allies from attack by enemy strategic nuclear ballistic missiles. To the United States of course, the Strategic Defense Initiative could realize ground-breaking technological advances but Britain had much to gain too. In return for Margaret Thatcher’s support for the Star Wars program, the *Reagan Administration* promised a number of lucrative SDI contracts to

the British defense industry including partnerships with key British defense companies such as *Marconi Defense Systems* (a subsidiary of Britain’s *General Electric Company* (GEC) – not related to the American General Electric) and the *Royal Military College*. The British economy was struggling and the offer could not have come at a better time.

Work continued on the Star Wars project for a few years but alas, the Star Wars project met a sudden and unexpected end in 1988 (although remnants of the program continue to this day). After four years of study, it was announced that a global space-based shield such as “Star Wars” was impossible using existing technology and that any such potential security program based on its proposed technology was at least a decade or more away. By then, the world had begun to recognize that dozens of British scientists who worked on projects related to the top-secret program had begun to die mysterious deaths.

# Suspicious deaths creep up on military defense personnel

In 1986, a Bristol coroner, Donald Hawkins, publicly announced his findings of an unusual connection between the deaths of two computer experts, Vimal Dajibhai and Ashad Sharif, who were both involved in SDI-related research. The world would soon recognize that the deaths of British scientists in the ultra-secret world of sophisticated weaponry involved more than just a couple of men – the total suspicious deaths of world-renowned military-defense scientists numbered well over two dozen men. Most of the deaths occurred after the men had successfully completed important defense-related projects or left one project for another and most were ruled suicides even though families swore the men showed no signs of depression and had no apparent motive for killing themselves. The top-secret nature of the defense programs they were working on and the government's unwillingness to discuss the deaths only added more fuel to the conspiratorial fire. According to *Computer News*:



“It is possible to believe that the official reluctance to give information on these deaths is instinctive rather than conspiratorial. It is equally possible to believe that these cases are the tip of an iceberg.”

Was someone killing Strategic Defense Initiative scientists and if so, why?

## Reported SDI scientists begin to die in Britain

### Defense-industry leader Marconi Space Systems

The first widely-recognized death was that of 24-year-old *Marconi Space Systems* computer engineer, Vimal Dajibhai. At the time, Marconi Space Systems was Britain's leading electronics-defense firm with strong and longstanding ties to the British military and intelligence communities. Shortly after the spate of mysterious deaths, Marconi began a merger with *Matra Espace* (1989) creating the *Matra Marconi Space Systems* company. After several subsequent mergers, acquisitions, and splits, all remnants of the original Marconi company ceased to exist as did readily-available records of their activities during the time of the mysterious deaths. If Marconi was involved in the deaths of the SDI scientists, it would likely remain a lost secret forever.

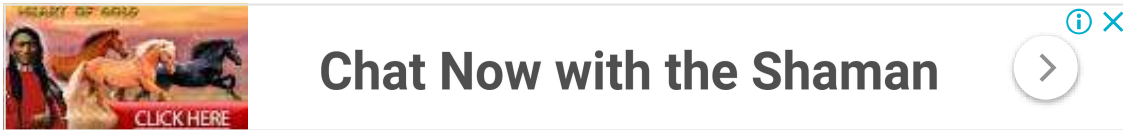


### The death of Vimal Dajibhai (August 1986)

It was reported that Vimal Dajibhai had worked on an SDI related simulation system and was about to leave Marconi for a higher-paying job in *London* (he was in his last week of employment with Marconi) when his body was found in a gorge after falling 240 feet from the *Clifton Suspension Bridge* in Bristol in August 1986. Earlier that evening, Dajibhai had phoned his wife to tell her he would be working late on the SDI simulator project. Authorities could find no explanation for why he travelled to *Bristol*, a city 100 miles from his home, with which Dajibhai had no known connection.

Dajibhai's body was to be cremated but the cremation was halted at the last minute (literally) after a police report surfaced mentioning a needle-sized puncture wound on his left buttock. A police press conference later stated that the puncture was caused by a bone fragment and the cremation was allowed to continue. The coroner suspected suicide but an open verdict was returned after he could not conclusively confirm whether Dajibhai had been pushed off the bridge or whether he had jumped.

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Police testified that Dajibhai had been suffering from depression and that he had been drinking with a friend shortly before his death. Family and friends denied the claims saying Dajibhai had no history of personal or emotional problems and that he had not taken a drink of alcohol in his entire life.

## The death of Ashad Sharif (October 1986)



A coworker of Dajibhai's was the next to suffer a mysterious death. 26-year-old Ashad (aka Arshad, Ashaad) Sharif was a London-based computer analyst for Marconi Defense Systems who was reportedly working on satellite based detection of enemy vessels in Marconi's Stanmore, Middlesex headquarters at the time of his death. On October 28, 1986, Sharif allegedly drove to a public park, not far from where Dajibhai had died, tied a nylon rope around his neck, attached it to a tree, and sped off in his Audi 80, decapitating himself. Reports surfaced that Sharif had been seen on the night of October 28 in a hotel with a bundle of high-denomination banknotes. No mention of the banknotes appeared in the inquest nor was the large sum of cash ever found on his body.

Marconi initially insisted that Sharif was only an insignificant junior employee at the company and that he had nothing to do with the Star Wars program. Then it was also learned that Sharif had worked on the same top-secret defense project as Dajibhai who had died a couple of months earlier. Co-workers added that Sharif was about to be promoted and moved to another department within Marconi.

The deaths of Sharif and Dajibhai were the first to raise eyebrows and authorities quickly moved to offer viable reasons for the "coincidental" loss of lives. Investigators proposed that Sharif was depressed over a recent breakup. However, the lover in question maintained that she had not seen Sharif in over three years – and that she was nothing more than his landlady at the time. Further discounting the "jilted lover"

theory, another woman from Pakistan came forward and admitted that she was his fiancée. Sharif's family confirmed the relationship and said he had been genuinely in love with her and that she was due to arrive in town soon for a visit.

Authorities next said a taped message had been found in the car which appeared to them to be a verbal suicide note. Family members listened to the tape and disagreed. They were reportedly informed by the coroner that it was "not in their best interest" to attend the inquest.

## **The death of Richard Pugh (January 1987)**

Following the deaths of Sharif and Dajibhai, Richard Pugh, a computer designer, was found dead in his home in January 1987. Richard Pugh was a computer consultant for the *Ministry of Defense*. He was found dead, wrapped head-to-toe in rope that was looped four times around his neck. The coroner listed his death as an "accident" from a sexual experiment gone awry.

## **A defense employee vanishes – the reappears with no recollection of the event**

### **The disappearance of Avtar Singh Gida (January 1987)**

Amid the series of unusual defense-industry-related deaths was the odd disappearance of 26-year-old Avtar Singh Gida who was conducting submarine warfare research reportedly linked with a Star Wars contract. Gida was under contract by *Marconi Space and Defense Systems* and just three weeks away from completing his doctorate research on signal processing when he disappeared mysteriously on January 8, 1987. Gida vanished just two days before his wedding anniversary and had already bought his wife a gift for the occasion. He was seen last with a colleague near a reservoir in *Derbyshire* in northern England, where they were conducting an experiment in underwater acoustics. The two separated for lunch and Singh-Gida never returned. Police divers searched the area around the lake but found no body in the reservoir.

Authorities feared foul play (they were particularly concerned because of Singh-Gida's friendship with Dajibhai, who had died mysteriously the August prior), but Singh-Gida was discovered in Paris four months later on May 8, 1987 working under an assumed name in a sweatshop filled with illegal immigrants. Authorities said he told them he could not remember any details of his disappearance. He later resumed his scientific work and to date, has refused to discuss his disappearance nor the death of his colleague, Vimal Dajibhai with anyone.

## **Two lecturers on top-secret projects die in separate carbon monoxide poisoning "accidents"**

In the months of January and February 1987, two prominent lecturers, John Brittan and Peter Peapell, suffered similar "accidents" and died from carbon monoxide poisoning. Both had recently returned from the United States and both had conducted research at the *Royal College of Military Science*, a research

facility located in Shrivenham that was intimately involved with a number of Britain's most ground-breaking defense projects, presumably including the top-secret Strategic Defense Initiative.

## The death of John Brittan (January 1987)

52-year-old John Brittan, former computer science officer and expert for the Ministry of Defense, was found dead in his garage on January 12, 1987. He was found sitting in his parked car, with the engine running. With no history of depression nor apparent reason to end his life, his death was ruled an accidental death by carbon monoxide poisoning.

## The death of Peter Peapell (February 1987)



The following month (February 22, 1987), 46-year-old Peter Peapell, a scientist and professor at the *Royal Military College of Science* suffered a similar fate. Peapell was found dead beneath his car, the motor still running, in the garage of his *Oxfordshire* home. His face was near the tailpipe and the door to the garage was closed.



Peapell, a world authority on communications technology, electronic surveillance, and target detection, had been working on a high-security project testing the resistance of Titanium to explosives as well as consulting on beryllium metallurgy, which is used in nuclear weapons design. According to his wife Maureen, Peter was happy at work and had just received a sizeable raise. She emphasized that they had no marital or money problems.

On the night of his death, Peapell went out with his wife, Maureen, and their friends. When they returned home, Maureen went straight to bed while Peapell stayed behind to park the car in the garage. The next morning, Maureen discovered that her husband had not come to bed. She found him in the garage, his body parallel to the car's rear bumper with his mouth near the tailpipe. The car's engine was still running. She pulled him into the open air but he was already dead. It was proposed that he had crawled under the car to investigate a rattle (or some similar mechanical failure) and had been overcome by the automobile's fumes. However, Maureen reportedly noted that the light in the garage was broken – and Peapell was not found with a flashlight in his possession.

Doubts were of course raised and a local constable attempted to recreate the deadly scene. He found that with the garage door closed, he was unable to crawl underneath the car. The constable also noted that it was not possible to close the garage door from Peapell's position (indicating Peapell would have had to close the door before he moved under the car). Investigative reports noted that carbon deposits found on the inside of the garage door showed the car had only been running a short period of time (Maureen had arisen from her sleep and found the body seven hours after going to bed).

The coroner's inquest could not determine whether the death was a homicide, a suicide or an accident.

# The spate of SDI scientist deaths accelerates

## The death of David Skeels (February 1987)

David (Edwin) Skeels was a 43-year-old Marconi engineer. He was found dead in his automobile, a length of hosepipe stretched from the exhaust pipe into the car. His death was quickly ruled a suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning.



## The death of David Sands (March 1987)

In March 1987, 37-year-old David Sands, a senior scientist and satellite projects manager for one of Marconi's sister companies, Easams (*Elliot Automation Space and Advanced Military Systems*), died when his car, carrying two additional five-gallon gas cans in the trunk, crashed into a vacant restaurant building in Basingstoke, 50 miles west of London, and exploded into flames. He was incinerated beyond recognition. The crash was immediately suspect – Sands had been on a routine drive to work (and was wearing his seatbelt at the time of the crash) and had made a sudden, inexplicable U-turn before the crash. Investigators could find no clue as to who put the gasoline tanks in his car before he embarked on his fateful ride

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Sands had reportedly been working on sensitive computer-controlled satellite radar systems for the SDI project and was up for a promotion at the time of his death. He had just returned from a family vacation in Venice, Italy to celebrate the end of a successful three-year systems project.

Given the suspicious circumstances, the coroner refused to rule Sand's death a suicide. An open verdict was returned. Soon thereafter, the newspapers received "leaked" information hinting that Sands had been depressed and under a tremendous emotion strain. His mother-in-law, Margaret Worth, quickly dismissed the claims.

"When David died, it was a great mystery to us. He was very successful. He was very confident. He had just pulled off a great coup for his company, and he was about to be greatly rewarded. He had a very bright future ahead of him. He was perfectly happy the week before this happened."

## The death of Victor Moore (April 1987)

46-year-old Victor Moore died in April 1987 of a drug overdose. He was a design engineer for Marconi Space and Defense Systems and had just finished work on infrared satellite systems, a task almost certainly tied to the Star Wars project. A suicide verdict was returned by the coroner but his death reportedly triggered a MI5 investigation (results of the investigation remain unknown).

## The death of Stuart Gooding (April 1987)

When Stuart Gooding, a post-graduate student at the Royal Military College, was killed in an auto accident on April 10, 1987 while vacationing in Cyprus, members of the Royal Military College were in Cyprus conducting military exercise at the same time. At least one senior Royal Military College employee felt the head-on collision was suspicious. Still, his death was ruled an accident.



## The death of Robert Greenhalgh (April 1987)

Robert Greenhalgh was a contracts manager at ICL's defense division (*International Computers Limited* – a Marconi subsidiary) when he fell 40 feet from a railway bridge on his way to work on April 10, 1987 – the same day Stuart Gooding was killed in an auto accident (see above). Greenhalgh survived for three days during which time he told hospital workers he had no recollection of how or why he fell from the bridge. He succumbed to his injuries and died on April 13, 1987, less than two weeks after his defense project partner, David Sands, died in a fiery car crash (see David Sands death details above).

## The death of George Kountis (April 1987)

George Kountis, a systems analyst, drowned in April 1987 after his BMW plunged into the *Mersey River* in Liverpool. His death was ruled "death due to misadventure".

## The death of Shani Warren (April 1987)

Shani Warren was a personal assistant at Micro Scope. Four weeks before *Micro Scope* was acquired by Marconi, her body was found in 18 inches of water on April 10, 1987, a short distance from the bridge where Robert Greenhalgh fell to his death on the same day. Warren was found gagged, feet bound, hands tied behind her back, and a noose around her neck. It was suggested that Warren gagged herself, bound her feet, tied her hands behind her back, and hobbled to the lake on four-inch stiletto heels to drown herself in a foot of water. As such, her death was not ruled a homicide and instead, the coroner returned an open verdict.



## The death of Mark Wisner (April 1987)

24-year-old Mark Wisner, software engineer at the Ministry of Defense, was found dead in his home in April 1987. He had a plastic bag over his head wrapped with several feet of plastic wrap. His death was ruled an accident due to sexual experimentation gone awry. At the time of his death, Wisner was working on an "experimental combat station", presumably tied to the top-secret SDI program.

## The death of Michael Baker (May 1987)



22-year-old Michael Baker, a digital communications expert, died on May 3, 1987 when his BMW crashed through a road barrier near Poole in Dorset. The coroner's verdict was "death due to misadventure".

## **The death of Frank Jennings (June 1987)**

Frank Jennings, a 60-year-old electronic weapons engineer, died in June 1987 from a "heart attack". No inquest was held.

## **The death of Russell Smith (January 1988)**

23-year-old Russell Smith, a lab technician at the *Atomic Energy Research Establishment*, fell to his death from a cliff in Cornwall in January 1988. Police began searching for 23-year-old Russell Smith in mid-January after he vanished from his parents' home, where he lived. He had previously asked for a day off from his job at the *Atomic Energy Authority* in *Harwell*, 50 miles west of London. His death was ruled a suicide.



## **The death of Trevor Knight (March 1988)**

Trevor Knight, 52-year-old computer engineer for Marconi Defense Systems, was found in his car near his suburban London home in March 1988. It was ruled that he had committed suicide by rigging a hose from the tailpipe into the car.

## **The death of John Ferry (August 1988)**

John Ferry, 60-year-old marketing director for Marconi, was found dead in his apartment in August 1988. His body was found on the floor of the apartment, the stripped ends of an electrical cord in his mouth. His wife noted that one month before his death, a truck had purposely swerved at him and his daughter while they drove to the store. The incident left Ferry shaken and afraid for his life. His death could not be ruled suicide nor homicide and the coroner's ruling remains open.

## **The death of Alistair Beckham (August 1988)**

50-year-old aerospace projects and software engineer, Alistair Beckham, was found dead in his dark, musty backyard toolshed behind his home. Bare wires leading from a live electrical main were wrapped around his chest and a piece of cloth was stuffed in his mouth. A paperclip was placed across the electrical main to ensure the breaker did not trip while the electrical current ran through his body.

Beckham's specialty was the design of computer software for sophisticated naval defense systems and he was reportedly working on a project for the Strategic Defense Initiative at the time of his death. His wife, Mary Beckham, said:



“We don’t know why he did it...if he did it. And I don’t believe that he did do it. He wouldn’t go out to the shed [to do that]. There had to be something...”

His wife noted that Beckham had installed a wide-angle peep hole on the door of the toolshed. She said that upon his death, government authorities swarmed the home to remove any defense-related documents he may have had in his possession. The coroner’s verdict remains open.

## The death of Andrew Hall (September 1988)

33-year-old Andrew Hall, an engineering manager for *British Aerospace*, was found dead in his car in September 1988. A hose was attached to the tailpipe of his car and routed into the interior of the vehicle. Friends say Hall was happy, well-liked, and “had everything to live for”. His death was ruled a suicide.

## The many deaths prompt more questions (1987-1988)

As early as the middle of 1987, some already recognized something odd was afoot. After the death of David Sands in March 1987, opposition lawmaker and defense specialist John Cartwright wrote to *Defense Procurement Minister* Lord Trefgarne saying:

”I do not wish to be accused of inventing plots more suited to a TV thriller than real life, but I think the circumstances of these four cases stretch the possibility of mere coincidence too far.”



Trefgarne wrote back:

”I agree that it is odd that all were computer scientists working in the defense field, but there any relationship stops. ... I do not see that a special inquiry such as you suggest is either desirable or necessary at this time.”

By then end of 1988, even more eyebrows had been raised. A government insider was quoted as saying:

“It is odd that all were computer scientists working in the defense field’ but has rejected calls for an inquiry. All the deaths look like suicides, but only two have been so ruled officially. In no case has a convincing motive for suicide been made known.”

Recognizing the series of defense-industry-related deaths were more than coincidence, Doug Hoyle, a member of *British Parliament* and head of a scientists’ union, officially asked the *Ministry of Defense* to investigate the series of suspicious deaths in Britain’s scientific community. The British government refused to launch an inquiry and the United States Pentagon refused to even comment on the deaths. According to the governments, the deaths were all a matter of coincidence. In response, Hoyle asked:

“How many more deaths before we get the government to give the answers? From a security point of view, surely both ourselves and the Americans ought to be looking into it.”

# Was there an ulterior motive behind the deaths of SDI scientists?



No clear motive for the spate of scientist deaths has ever surfaced and with a suicide rate more than twice the national average, something was obviously amiss. Some suspect the scientists may have been selling Star Wars secrets to the Russians and were either silenced by the military or took their own lives after no longer being able to live with themselves. Others suspect the scientists stumbled onto a sophisticated espionage ring and were silenced before they could reveal any information. Or possibly the Russians were killing the scientists in an attempt to hinder progress of a project that would certainly have posed a threat to their country.

Some propose the scientists knew of illegal Marconi activities (e.g. systematically defrauding the government) and were about to blow the whistle or possibly the scientists knew of illegal Marconi activities and the stress did indeed get to them. A confidential source in Parliament explained whistleblower sentiment in Britain at the time:

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“In America, there are considerable incentives for people to blow the whistle if they’re being asked to perform illegal acts like ripping off the government. However, in this country there have been perhaps 20 people who’ve blown the whistle, and none of them have ever worked again. They didn’t receive any compensation. Here, you don’t get any recognition. You get threatened with prosecution under the Official Secrets Act. They can fire you. Then they can take away your home and get you blacklisted. It’s an impossible position to be placed in.”

On the other hand, *The National Forum Foundation*, a conservative Washington D.C. think tank, believes the deaths are the work of European-based, left-wing terrorists, such as those who took credit for gunning down a West German bureaucrat who’d negotiated Star Wars contracts. An even more outrageous theory suggests that the Russians have developed an electromagnetic “death ray,” with which they’re driving the British scientists to suicide.

Many in the paranormal community have long believed the top-secret Star Wars project was based on technology gleaned from extraterrestrial sources. They theorize that once their jobs were complete, the scientists were killed to keep them from revealing the true source of the space-based technology, a revelation that the governments felt would have earth-shattering consequences.

## Prior suspicious defense-department-related deaths surface

As public awareness grew, and suspicions that the defense-related deaths of more than a dozen scientist from 1986 through 1987 were homicides, it was discovered that the slew of unusual military-defense-related deaths were not new. In fact, they dated back to 1982, around the same time that the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program was conceived.



## **The death of Keith Bowden (March 1982)**

45-year-old Keith Bowden, a brilliant computer scientist and professor at *Essex University* and expert in computer-controlled aircraft, worked for one of the major Star Wars contractors in England. He died when his Land Rover unexpectedly careened across a four-lane highway and plunged off a bridge into an abandoned railroad yard while he was driving home from a London social function.

The coroner listed his death as an accident and hinted that he may have been drunk and driving too fast. His wife, Hillary Bowden and her lawyer suspected a cover-up. Friends who had spent the evening with Bowden denied that he had been drinking. And there was the odd condition of his car.

“My solicitor instructed an accident specialist to examine the automobile. Somebody had taken the wheels off and put others on that were old and worn. At the inquest this was not allowed to be brought up. Someone asked if the car was in a sound condition, and the answer was yes. It certainly looked like foul play.”

Note: See photo of the tires that were placed on the Land Rover above.

## **Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Godley goes missing (April 1983)**

Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Godley, 49-years-old, was a defense expert at the Royal Military College of Science. He disappeared without a trace. When his father died in 1987, leaving Godly a rather large sum of money, he never showed up to receive it. He is presumed to be dead.

## **The death of Roger Hill (March 1985)**

49-year-old Roger Hill, a radar designer for Marconi, died when he allegedly killed himself with a shotgun in his home.

## **The death of Jonathan Walsh (November 1985)**

Jonathan Walsh, a digital-communications expert for a Marconi parent firm, was 29 years old when he fell to his death from his hotel room in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Africa. He was in Africa working on a telecom project and had previously expressed fear for his life. The coroner’s verdict remains open.

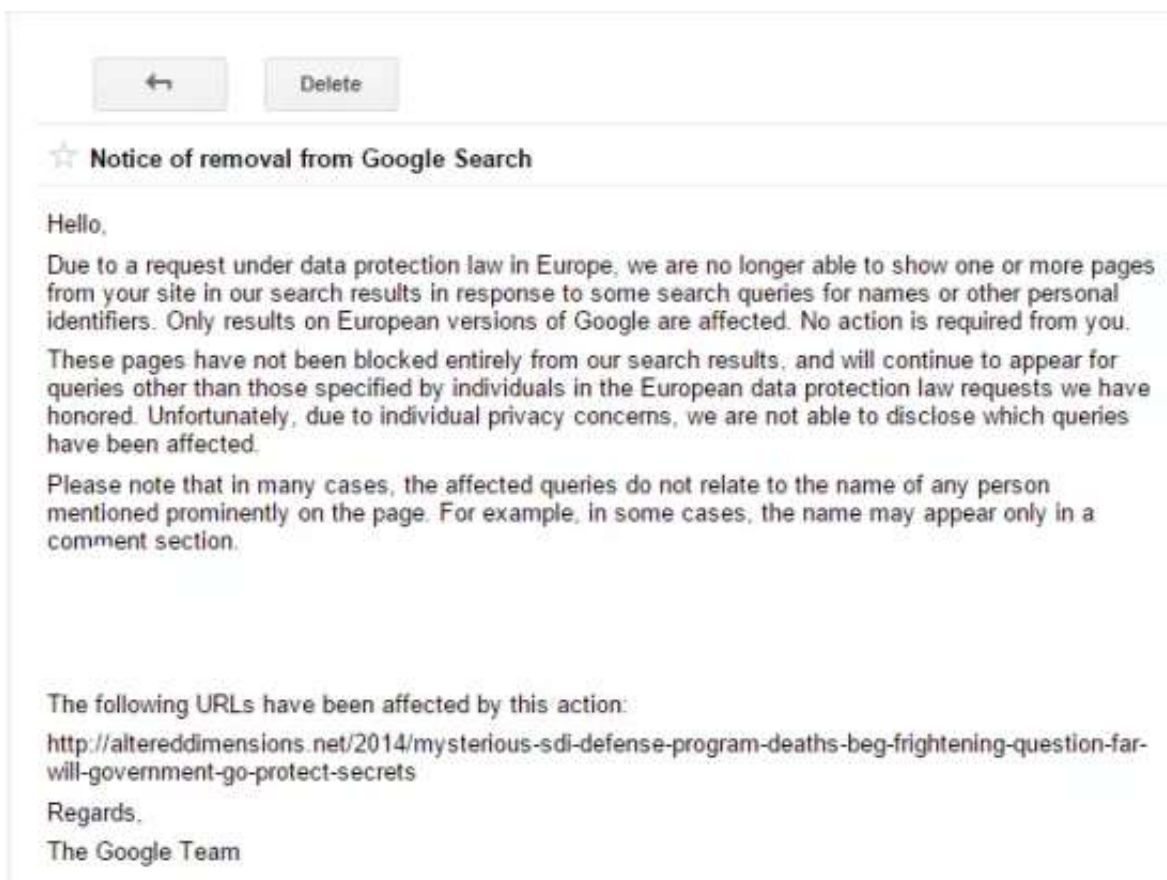


# Coincidence, random murder, suicide, or conspiracy?

NBC News London correspondent Henry Champ famously wrote, “In the world of espionage, there is a saying: Twice is coincidence, but three times is enemy action.” We say that more than twenty unusual deaths is a sure sign of a conspiracy.

## Update: Did Altered Dimensions become part of the conspiracy?

The following notice was sent to Altered Dimensions on January 24, 2015, apparently in response to a request from a foreign government to remove this page from Google search results. Note that this was not an email message (that could be forged) but an official Google notification posted in my Google Webmaster Tools account (a secured Google area for webmasters). Articles concerning suspicious defense department deaths seem to be censored in Europe.



Transcript of “Notice of removal from Google Search” notification to Altered Dimensions:

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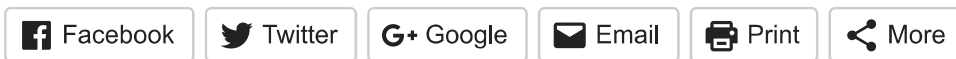
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Regards,

The Google Team

Sources: Sun Sentinel (1988), Democratic Underground (2007), AP Wire News Archive, The Rense, Wikipedia, The Independent, The Daily Telegraph, Computer News, Inside the Gemstone File (book), 20/20 News (1989)



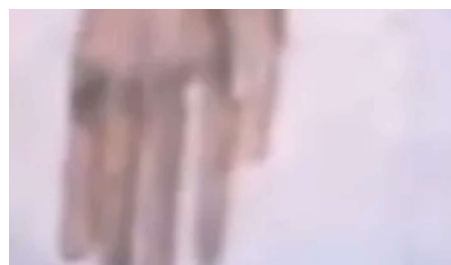
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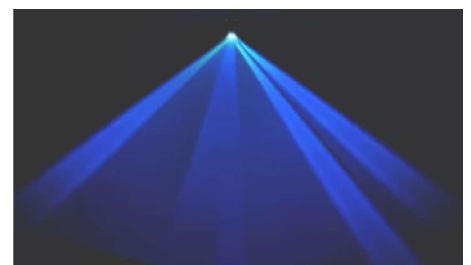
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