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## Airspace Activist Eyes Unfriendly Skies

By MATT HAMPTON

When Alan Gross of Flushing looked out his window Aug. 13 of this year, he was looking for a blimp. What he saw instead floated like a butterfly, but stung him like a bee.



Contrails in the sky over Cochise, Arizona.

Absent a dirigible, Gross was concerned by the presence of contrails over the Manhattan skyline, zigzagging in drunken X's across the heavens.

Contrails are the condensation tail left by an airplane as it travels through an area of cold air while expelling engine exhaust. It's similar to the process that occurs when a person can see their breath on a cold day.

Gross, who had been a vocal advocate for the establishment of a blimp port at the defunct Flushing Airport a few years ago, produced a camcorder and recorded hours of the atmospheric ballet, all the while concerned that it's location over Manhattan may have been nefarious in nature.

"I looked out the window and saw this Tic-Tac-Toe in the sky," Gross said. "I was flabbergasted."

Gross was concerned that the trails were acting unusually, but was unsure exactly how to classify what he was seeing. After exhaustive Internet research, Gross concluded that the contrails he was viewing were actually "chemtrails." Chemtrails refer to contrails that some citizens, such as Gross, believe may contain chemicals for the purposes of weather manipulation.

Feeding the fear that these alleged chemtrails have induced are two pieces of federal legislation currently being considered in the House and Senate. Respectively U.S. House Bill 2995 and U.S. Senate Bill 517, the bills are short legislative tidbits that call for the formation of committees to explore the possibility of weather manipulation.

Senate Bill 517, introduced by Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-Texas) months before Hurricane Katrina made landfall in New Orleans, has been lambasted by its critics outside the Beltway for being too vague and for promoting cloud seeding, a practice that some environmentalists say could be harmful. As well, the bill has been criticized for implying "ownership" over weather in a certain area, which is a slippery slope in a global ecosystem.

A message left at Senator Hutchinson's office was not returned, though the language in both S. 517 and HR 2995 both lack any mention of ongoing atmospheric experimentation or chemtrails.

"The Chemtrail theory, in my mind, is a misunderstanding of jet contrails in the upper atmosphere," said Thomas Downs, of the meteorological consulting firm Weather 2000. "Contrails tend to do different things as winds in the upper atmosphere increase."

Downs continued to say that when contrails occur in a high concentration at various altitudes, they can create all kinds of unexpected visuals. Downs was

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quick to add that past weather modification programs, including a 20-year government program called Project Stormfury, which sought to lessen the destructive force of hurricanes, have all been abandoned due to high cost and diminutive result.

Geoff Brady, producer of WBAI's "Law and Disorder" radio program, is currently working on a documentary about weather modification, taking a special look at chemtrails.

"Once you do notice that this is going on," he said, "then you do look at the sky a little differently."

Based on research gathered by the Agricultural Defense Coalition, Brady believes that contrails are using particulate compounds, composed of aluminum oxide and barium combined with atmospheric antennae "to cool and warm particular areas of the atmosphere."

The goal of such a program, Brady contends, would be to lessen or increase the intensity of storms in a given area by manipulating the ionosphere.

Downs, however, thinks the theory might be too farfetched.

"[One] problem with dispersing chemicals so high up in the atmosphere is that they will inevitably be dispersed randomly by the very strong winds of the jet stream," he said. "The particles will get so diffuse that the original intent of what they are supposed to be doing would be almost impossible to achieve."

After doing his own research, Gross had a theory of his own about the chemtrails.

"What they're trying to do is geo-engineer the planet to whatever they want to do," he said.

Speaking scientifically, however, Downs had some advice. "In scientific terms, we look for the simplest explanation – that's usually the correct one."