

Strategic National Ontological Weapon (SNOW)

SNOW is a suitcase-sized product of early Cold War Weird Science, and it shows: everything about it is glass and dials and a steel casing that can absolutely shrug off a bullet. It was 'invented' in 1946 by the State Department's Interim Research and Intelligence Service (IRIS). More accurately, it was invented in 1942 by a tame mad scientist seconded to the Office of Strategic Services' Research and Analysis branch, who then got transferred over to State in 1945, along with the rest of what would become IRIS. Once that happened, the State Department felt comfortable *officially* telling Harry S Truman that he happened to have a single-use cosmic reset button.

...Maybe. The math is sound. The math is absolutely sound, and so is the engineering. "Push the button" (which is not even nearly as easy as it sounds), and SNOW will activate. The theory (which is just as sound as the math and the engineering) is that when activated SNOW will change our current reality to, well, something else. Whatever it is, it'll support human life and civilization, and the metaphysicists attached to the project in its OSS days all concluded that the net result would be an

improvement on current affairs, but: you that button can only be pushed once. Whatever else happens, SNOW will not follow humanity into the new reality.

Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Nixon all grappled with the implications of this item, and all decided eventually to never use SNOW except at the most dire need. LBJ never even heard of it -- John F Kennedy told only his brother about SNOW, and Bobby Kennedy inadvertently took that secret to his grave -- and Richard Nixon decided to not brief Gerald Ford on the subject, and certainly not Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan apparently didn't need it anyway, and by then Nixon was convinced that SNOW was best left to gather dust in whatever State Department annex it ended up in when the last bureaucrat assigned to the project retired in 1983.

Just as well, really. In 1992 the crate containing SNOW and its operating files was accidentally misfiled as being part of an internal investigation into State Department approved smuggling operations in Yugoslavia. Which is to say, it got inadvertently buried even deeper, and in a way that wouldn't see the light of day until its eventual automatic declassification, twenty-five years later.

Or, put another way: until next week. No doubt the eventual historical researcher who opens that crate will find the contents absolutely fascinating, and that the excitement level in his life will dramatically increase. For as long as **that** lasts...

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