

Mapping Secret Places and Sensitive Sites : Examining the Cryptome 'Eyeballing' Map Series

Martin Dodge

Maps can reveal hidden places that are beyond our sight. But they also have a unique power to deceive us by deliberately not revealing what is actually on the ground. Governments have many secret places, sensitive sites and critical infrastructures that they wish to remain hidden from prying eyes. This article considers the unique potential of cartography in revealing these hidden places.

Introduction

The one government with the most to hide is undoubtedly the United States with its huge military and security apparatus, operating from innumerable bases and bunkers spread across the globe; a good number of which are in Britain (see McCamley 2002; Wood 2001; Campbell 1984 provides interesting historical detail). Vanderbilt (2002, 145) terms these as negative spaces, "... defined by what cannot be seen; they are pieced together by rumour, blurred aerial photographs, and glimpses of vents and other infrastructure that peek out from their peripheries." Indeed, there is great fascination in contemporary culture - bordering on *X-Files* paranoiac obsession for some - with the activities of the military-security complex, and in particular with seeing what is behind the formidable fences and intimidating 'no entry' signs of its hidden places. An examination of the 'Eyeballing' project (www.cryptome.org/eyeball.htm), developed by activist John Young, shows the unique potential of cartography in revealing these hidden places. The project uses publicly available maps and aerial photography, sourced from the Internet, to give a view into some of these secret and sensitive sites across the United States and Britain.

The project consists of series of individual 'eyeballing' web pages, each of which focuses on a particular military base, intelligence facility or other 'sensitive site', like nuclear power plants and dams. 'Eyeballing' exploits the potential of hypertext to author a cartographic collage, piecing together a diverse range of aerial photographs, topographic maps at different scales, photographs, along with expert commentary by Young, annotated with corrections and clarifications emailed in from (usually anonymous) readers. There are also hyperlinks to supplementary documents and other relevant websites, while individual 'eyeball' pages are themselves cross referenced by hyperlinks. To produce the 'eyeballs', Young only utilises public Internet sources of maps and imagery, typically topographic mapping from MapQuest and Multimap, supplemented with aerial photography from Terraserver and Getmapping. Even though the 'eyeballs' have an unpolished, almost amateurish look to them, the series represents a novel and valuable atlas of hidden places.

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Each eyeball spatialises a particular story of a hidden, sensitive site, engaging with the reader to actively explore and think what happens there. As of October 2003 Young has created 208 separate 'eyeballing' web pages and the series continues to expand in numbers and in its scope of subjects to map. So far the 'eyeballing' series has covered 11 airforce bases, 17 naval bases, the FBI, the CIA, the National Security Agency, GCHQ, MI5/MI6, nerve gas storage facilities, nuclear power plants, 54 dams, numerous little known intelligence listening posts, as well as the Kennedy Space Centre, the Statue of Liberty, and one particular family ranch in Crawford, Texas (Figures 1a and 1b).

As well as the obvious sites, there are also some more unusual selections of 'eyeball' targets that reveal the broad scope of the project as well some of the idiosyncratic concerns of Young, such as Las Vegas and most recently the homes of Arnold and Maria Schwarzenegger. He has even Eyeballed himself¹. The focus of Young's interest is not solely with the 'top secret' bunkers, but also with the large number of facilities and infrastructures that are usually obscured from public view and not really talked about. There is still plenty more to do, of course, and he is working alone on the project so it represents a considerable individual investment of time and effort.

Origins of Eyeballing

In a short email interview in March 2003, I asked John Young about the 'eyeballing' project, focusing on his aims and objectives in producing them. The project started in March 2002 as Young became intrigued by the continuing official 'disappearance' of the US Vice President Dick Cheney from post 9-11 Washington DC to a secret bunker, which the media euphemistically reported as a 'secure, undisclosed location'. Young wanted "...to locate the safe hole and publish it". The secure location turned out to be a military command bunker, known as Site R, buried under Raven Rock Mountain in rural Pennsylvania, close to Camp David. This discovery provided the first 'eyeball' web page <<http://cryptome.org/site-r/site-r.htm>>, a part of which is shown Figures 2a and 2b.

Following on from the initial cartographic exposure of Site R, Young 'eyeballed' several obvious, high profile, organisations like the NSA, the FBI and the CIA, exposing their headquarters building complexes. He also did a timely sequence looking at America's capacity in terms of weapons of mass destruction in April 2002, eyeballing probable storage sites for nerve gas². The blurry and indistinct views of these facilities in the remote deserts of Utah provide a

Updated 5 May 2003

The FAA issued a notice prohibiting construction above 50 feet within a 3 nautical mile radius of the Texas presidential residence location given on 5 May 2003 as geographical coordinates 31[deg]34'45N, 97[deg]32'00W.

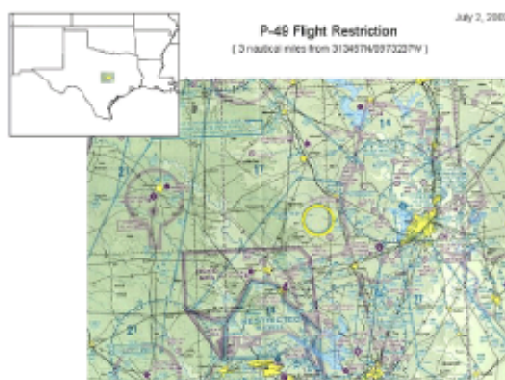
<http://cryptome.org/0a042203.txt>

This location on Mapquest:



29 August 2002:

The FAA has published three no-fly zones where the President may be housed: in Washington, DC, Camp David, MD and near Crawford, TX: <http://cryptome.org/bush-no-fly.htm>



The no-fly map for Crawford gives coordinates for the center of a no-fly zone, 312437N/0973237W, which might be interpreted as the approximate location of the Bush ranch. The following aerial photos and maps show the vicinity of the coordinates. The close-in infra-red photos have only recently appeared on Mapquest.com.

Source of maps and photos: Mapquest.com (color) and TerraServer USGS 15 Jan 1995 (monochrome), prior to the Bush purchase of the ranch in 1999.

The Crawford, TX, location:

<http://austin.about.com/library/weekly/aa021901a.htm>

Crawford has the Prairie Chapel Ranch now being called alternately the "Texas White House" or the "Western White House." First Lady Laura Bush spent several weeks after the inauguration readying the ranch for its new role as the Presidential retreat away from the Oval Office. President Bush has said "...when I'm not in Washington, there's a pretty good chance you'll find me on our place in Crawford, Texas."

George W. and Laura Bush purchased around 1600 acres just outside of Crawford in 1999. Located 18 miles southwest of Waco, Crawford is about 90 miles north of Austin and convenient to Fort Hood for those flights in on Air Force One. The ranch itself, eight miles northwest of Crawford, is in an area known as Prairie Chapel.

The ranch property includes a creek, canyon, waterfalls, and meadows where cattle and deer graze. The Bush family renovated an existing farmhouse and built a new home there. As an avid fisherman Bush added a private fishing lake stocked with bass. However, the curious trekking out to the ranch won't see any of that. From the road there's only pastures, barbed wire fences, and signs that warn "No stopping. No standing. No parking on right of way." You might, however, meet up with a few Secret Service agents near the ranch and in town.

FIGURE 1a
Part of the eyeball of the homes of President George W. Bush, created in August 2002.
<<http://cryptome.org/prez-eyeball.htm>>

**Eyeballing
the
President
Bush
Homes
in Texas (43)
and
Maine (41)**



Bush Ranch near Crawford, TX, USGS photo 19 Jan 1995

President George W. Bush (43) Ranch in Crawford, TX

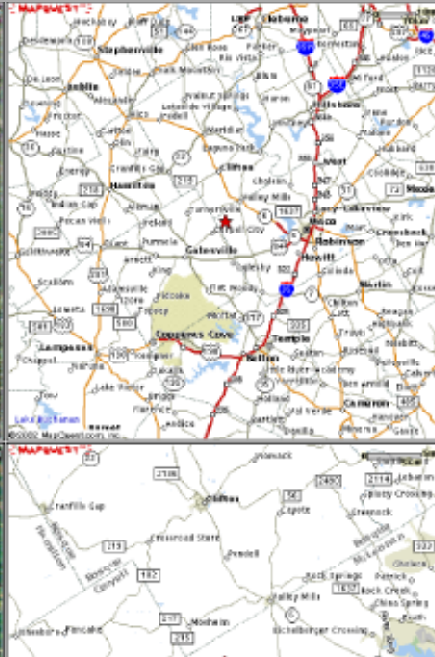


FIGURE 1b
Part of the eyeball of the homes of President George W. Bush, created in August 2002.
<<http://cryptome.org/prez-eyeball.htm>>

very pointed and potent reminder of the country in possession of the most WMD. Young says that developing composites of multiple sites, in order to expose “the extent of systems which cannot be seen in a single facility has been a goal – as common among geographers.” The eyeballing of undersea cable systems and the telecommunications hubs in New York City³ in July 2002 are good examples of this.

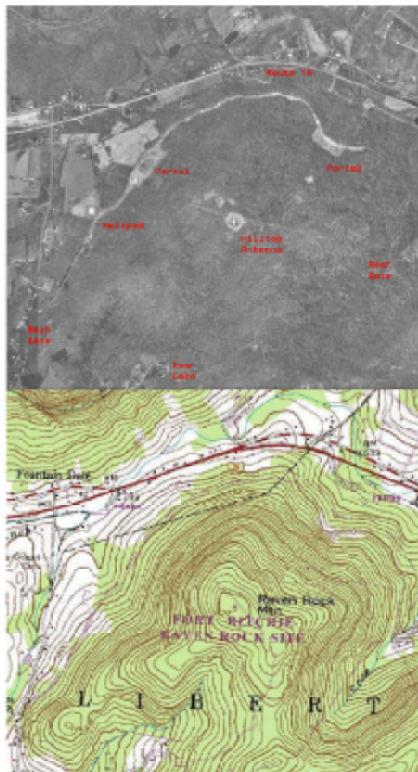
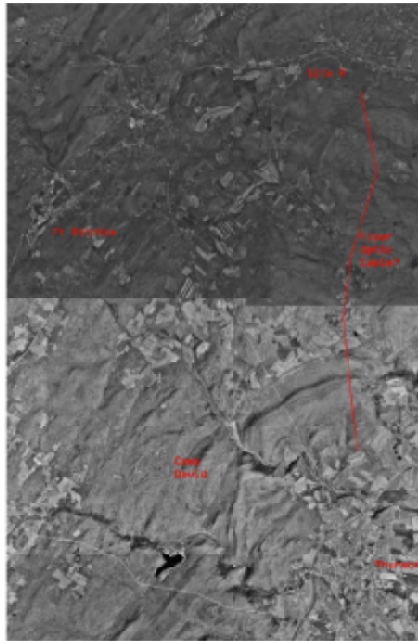
Young is not a cartographer, instead he trained as an architect and now runs a small practice in New York City with his partner Deborah Natsios. “As architects my wife and I have long used maps and cartography in professional

work”, said Young via email, noting however, that this “has customarily been quite local and limited compared to the eyeball series, and none of our work has involved military facilities.”

Young has a clear political agenda in creating the ‘eyeballing’ map montages, to show people the places that the powerful do not want the rest of the community to know about or think about. The mapping of facilities related to America’s continued maintenance of weapons of mass destruction, for example, is clearly designed to expose the hypocrisy of the Bush Government. The ‘eyeballing’ project is a small and quite recent part of Young’s activist work,

24 April 2003

Camp David is located about 6 miles from Site R. There is surely a communications link between the two, and perhaps an underground tunnel for communications systems, servicing the systems and personnel. The link might be way of Ft Ritchie which supports Site R. Here is a map showing the functional link. To the right is what appears to be a fiber optic cable linking Site R to Thurmont, MD. There's a warning sign for the cable near a main gate of Site R at the top of the red line (see photo below).



15 August 2002. See history of planning Site R during the Johnson Administration.

<http://cryptome.org/ajcc/ajcc.htm>

10 June 2001. Cryptome visited the Site R neighborhood on 9 June 2002, and took a few photos, presented below.

A note on our visit:

Private houses and farms are located just outside the gates of Site R, and a couple of residents watched us take photos but said nothing. While driving along a forest road looking for Site R gates we were startled to see a Maryland Police car following, no flashing lights, no siren. Nervous that somebody had reported our poking around the secret site, we stopped and asked the officer if that was the case. He said no, he was on his way to check on the Raven Rock Lutheran Camp which abuts Site R. We asked if there was any problem with us moving around and he said no. Later, we remembered that Site R is in Pennsylvania and the Lutheran Camp is in Maryland.

We encountered not a single suspicious person during our visit -- other than ourselves. We suspect the site is regularly scouted by many spies and the residents and the military care not a whit so long as you don't climb a fence, set off an alarm and scare yourself into needing EMS.

17 March 2002

Maps and aerial photos from MapQuest and TerraServer.

Site R - Raven Rock

This offers information on a hardened US military communications facility, Site R (Raven Rock) Alternate Joint Communications Center (AJCC), located beneath Raven Rock mountain, near Waynesboro, PA, reported to be the bunker used by Vice President Cheney during the months after 9/11.

News report on Site R:

March 14, 2002:

<http://www.citypaper.net/articles/031402/cr.cover.shtml>

December 20, 2001:

<http://www.ajcc.com/daily/12-20/12-20-01-022a@16.htm>

December 11, 2001:

<http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/2001121101komefront1.asp>

On Mount Weather and Site R, November/December 2001:

<http://www.hillatomsci.org/issues/200112011201schultz.html>

June 28, 2001:

<http://www.aerohousenews.com/archive/story1a062800.html>

May 1, 2000:

<http://www.cnn.com/2000/05/01/pol.war-05-01-00.apg>

April 26, 2000:

<http://www.cnn.com/2000/TECH/computing/04/26/ded.glass.online.idg/>

<http://www.fas.org/brookings/pubs/ajcc/site-raven-rock.htm>

Site R is the Alternate Joint Communications Center (AJCC) located in Raven Rock mountain (hence the name Site R) just over the Pennsylvania State Line near Waynesboro, Pa. The DHSIA Site-R Computer Operations staff provides computer services to the NSA, the Joint Staff, the OSD and other DoD agencies through Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs). The facility functions as the disaster recovery site for the JCS's GMC and DSA GUC. The various service [Army, Navy and Air Force] Emergency Operations Centers (AEOCs) are also located at Site R. Support is provided 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. The facility's Operations Center, JCS Technical Control Facility, the Northeast Dial Service Assistance Center and Information Center provide planning, installation, operation, and maintenance of over 38 communications systems (switching, transmission, data distribution, visual information, and power generation) that support the various customers of the Alternate Joint Communications Center Site R.

DoD description now removed from the Web, in Google cache:

<http://www.google.com/search?q=cach:T4de93x63DgCwww.dhsia.mil/ajcc/jcc6.html+%5224ie+%5227&N=en>

US Army 111th Signal Battalion at Raven Rock ("Signal Masters of the Rock"):

<http://www.usc.army.mil/111th/1111.htm>

Budget for Site R Integration Program (SRIP), 2001:

<http://www.dtic.mil/description/V2002/DSA/03020-6K.pdf>

<http://www.cryptome.org/site-r/site-r.htm>

04/11/2003

FIGURE 2a and 2b

A screenshot of part of the Site R eyeball, the Raven Rock bunker where Vice President Cheney hid out following the 9/11 attacks. The full eyeball web page is much longer, with a range of maps and aerial photographs at different scales as well as photographs of the gates of the facility taken by John Young on a visit to the area.

<<http://www.cryptome.org/site-r/site-r.htm>>

dedicated to exposing overbearing government and corporate secrecy, seeking to reveal the murky workings of powerful organisations that wish to operate hidden away from public scrutiny. He achieves this by the unflinching disclosure of sensitive and controversial documents via a unique information repository, an anti-secrecy library on

the Web, called *Cryptome* <<http://cryptome.org>>, "... which has no limits and does not control its borrowed holdings", says Young. The site has been online since 1996 and is an important node in the realm of freedom of information, challenging powerful interests particularly in the areas of surveillance technologies, digital rights and cryptography.

The 'Eyeballing' project can be seen as the subversive map room of the Cryptome library. Young has received no official comment or complaint about the nature of his mapping project thus far, but notes that the 'eyeballing' pages receive "quite an impressive number of downloads from official websites, in particular from the military".

Vision and Imagination

"Maps are densely packed with information which helps translate words into locations which may be visited either physically or in the imagination" says Young. The Eyeballing pages provide new vision that stimulates the imagination. They hint at more than can actually be seen, making the viewer feel somehow illicit in looking straight down onto some of the most secure and sensitive places on the planet, such as the NSA headquarters. They give a thrill at seeing something we are 'not meant to see' and yet the maps themselves are entirely conventional, legal and of course publicly available. This subversive feeling is created through the selection and then unconventional arrangement of a specific set of maps.

The matter-of-fact reality of the 'eyeball' mapping actually helps to 'ground' some of these murky, anonymous and deliberately intimidating organisations. When we can see that they inhabit an ordinary office building, in a beltway sprawl of Washington D.C. for example, it begins to reel them into our everyday reality from the *X-Files* fringe, cartography dissolving their mystery. The 'eyeballs' also give the audience a view that they could not normally get themselves, even if they wanted to. For most people it would be impossible to actually fly over the NSA complex in a plane.

The tactical exploitation of mapping in the 'eyeballing' series can also be read as placing the cartographic spotlight back onto the powerful themselves, in a very small way of course. The best mapping, in terms of accuracy and currency, has traditionally been the exclusive preserve of the military, and the strategic advantages this cartographic knowledge brings have been jealously guarded by those in power. Indeed, much of the current mapping technologies have military origins, most particularly for spying on enemies (see for example, Cloud 2002; Monmonier 2002).

Yet, maps, even very detailed ones, can only tell us so much. And Young himself is working within the constraints of freely available public spatial data sources, which are often partial and out of date. Consequently, the 'eyeballs' he can produce only scratch the surface of what is going on at these hidden and sensitive places. We may snatch a glimpse of the buildings, roads and other visible structures, but this is far from a panoptic view and grants the reader little sense of the implications of what is being performed daily at these sites. (Young's interpretative commentary does augment the mapping to a significant amount.) The interconnections, flows and chains of command, vital to the working of many hidden places, cannot be observed in static maps of physical facilities. Aerial photographs, topographic maps and satellite imagery can hint at the nature of power, as materially expressed through physi-

cal structures, but they cannot actually show us power relationships.

Moreover, those organisations with something really worth hiding have long been savvy to the watchful eyes above, putting their most sensitive sites fully underground⁴. Maps showing the access roads and entrance portals to such bunker complexes only give the barest hint of their subterranean extent. Nowadays much of the secret work of the military and intelligence community is actually transacted in cyberspace, in the data networks, servers and webs of encrypted information flows, which are again completely invisible to conventional cartographic display of physical facilities. Part of the wider agenda of Young's *Cryptome* project is to try to expose the actual workings of these virtual systems of security and intelligence through publishing documentary evidence on their structures, internal policies, statistics, budget details and other banal, but revealing, administrative materials of the various organisations involved.

Public Mapping

John Young's 'eyeballing' project has been made possible by the amount of detailed spatial data, now publicly available on the Internet. These maps are accessible and browsable to anyone online, through simple Web interfaces. The fact that one does not require specialised knowledge or software to use spatial data has greatly widened access. In recent years a great deal of aerial photography and satellite imagery, often from declassified military sources, as well as new commercial satellite systems, has also become publicly available, although the resolution and temporal scale of this imagery is still the poor relation compared to what is produced by current classified military systems. Clearly tensions may well arise between 'open skies' of detailed commercially satellite imagery and the entrenched view that the public should not know what is hidden behind walls and fences⁵.

'Eyeballing' demonstrates well the potential for novel applications of spatial data, created by non-specialists, once it becomes easily accessible, at least in the context of Britain and America. It shows what can be achieved in a quick, 'low-tech' fashion, by mixing and matching publicly sourced maps and imagery. It would have been very much harder to have created the eyeball web pages ten years ago for example, particularly as a one-man effort.

However, it would certainly be a lot tougher to attempt eyeballing outside the United States, as much of the rest of the world is a long way behind America in terms of access to detailed spatial data freely available on the Internet, and quite often sensitive sites, especially military facilities, are themselves censored from published mapping. "It is frustrating to lack access to eyeballing information outside the US like that available within", commented Young, "the US centricity is distorting of what information remains to be revealed about other countries." There are hidden places and sensitive sites all over the world and it would be interesting to see activists in other countries having a go at mapping them. "[W]e hope that the eyeball series will

induce other contributions of restricted and secret mapping information from other countries as well as the US", noted Young.

Yet, there are also worrying signs that the recent growth in public availability of detailed spatial data maybe in reverse. In the current 'chilling' atmosphere, of post 9-11 security paranoia, availability and easy access to whole rafts of public information, especially that describing critical infrastructure, is being questioned⁶. Spatial data, in particular, can easily be portrayed as somehow especially 'sensitive' and of likely value to terrorists⁷. The level of detail and freedom of access to digital mapping and imagery enjoyed today, may soon be locked away again, available only to 'authorised' users. Young passionately says, "wider public access is under attack by the secret keepers and should be fought vociferously". Diminishing public access to spatial data in the name of security will stifle innovation, while doing little or nothing to thwart determined criminals and terrorists.

The Internet itself is a deeply ambivalent medium and could well be a double edged sword in terms of freedom of access versus privacy implications. The medium can deliver wider public access but it can also, at the same time, further bolster the powerful through their ability to track individual interests and consumption patterns. As Young notes, "Spying by the secret keepers to protect their privilege is on the increase, especially on the net. It remains to be seen if the net's role to increase public access to information will be corrupted by those who spy on net usage – official and corporate."

Complicit Cartography

All maps are distortions of reality, as they have to be selective in what they show and do not show. Sometimes distortions are imposed deliberately for overt purposes of propaganda or misinformation and this works so well as people have an innate faith in maps as truthful representations of reality. (Monmonier's classic book, *How to Lie With Maps*, nicely debunks the myth of cartographic objectivity.)

In fact cartography, has long been a complicit tool, exploited by the powerful, to deceive and keep secret places hidden by deliberately *not* plotting them on maps. This has been explained by map historian Brian Harley in his theory of cartographic silences, whereby cartographers (usually at the direction of 'management') censor the map to hide the presence of features on the ground that one should reasonably expect to be represented in a map at that scale (Harley 1998). It has been most widely practised by the military, and not just in the past. In the first instance this is done to try to conceal things from the enemy and, thereby, to deceive them. The routine and widespread disinformation in cold war Soviet cartography, where places were incorrectly located and sensitive facilities left unmapped completely, is a well known and obvious case (see Postnikov 2002). Indeed, there has been recent popular interest in debunking the innocence of cartography and exposing the lies perpe-

trated, for example the recent British Library exhibition, *Lie of the Land: The Secret Life of Maps*⁸. *The deliberate concealment is practised by many governments even today, although, this kind of cartographic censorship is clearly problematic now in an era of 'open skies' satellite imagery, which can easily be purchased on the Web.*

Beyond simple map censorship to conceal secret places, the Harley's theory of 'silences' also advances the active role of cartography in maintaining established structures of power. Subtle and insidious decisions made in map-making work to emphasise some things and at the same time to de-emphasise other aspects of the landscape that are seen as less important. Cartography usually reflects the hegemonic interests of the powerful in society and actively denies the voice to weak. Thus certain things are deemed 'unmappable' for social reasons and never appear on government or commercially published maps. As Monmonier (1996, 122) puts it, "By omitting politically threatening or aesthetically unattractive aspects of geographic reality, and by focusing on the interests of civil engineers, geologists, public administrators, and land developers, our topographic 'base maps' are hardly basic to the concerns of public health and safety officials, social workers, and citizens rightfully concerned about the well-being of themselves and others."

Eyeballs as Maps of Resistance

Clearly, John Young's work in the 'eyeball' series only gives a pinhole view into the world of hidden places, but it is a revealing view nonetheless, and being freely distributed through the Web, it could be argued that these 'eyeballs' are potent maps of resistance to the growing secret state, turning the tools of the watchers onto themselves. In conclusion, I asked Young about his ideal 'eyeballing' map, without current practical restrictions, and this is what he said: "This would map surveillance systems of the world and methods of hiding those by artfully camouflaging with public disinformation."

Notes

- 1 Eyeballing of Cryptome in April 2002
<<http://www.cryptome.org/cpoc-eyeball.htm>>.
- 2 "Eyeballing a Weapon of Mass Destruction I"
<<http://cryptome.org/cbw-eyeball.htm>>, 25th April 2002.
- 3 See "Eyeballing US Transatlantic Cable Landings"
<<http://cryptome.org/cable-eyeball.htm>>, 7th July 2002;
"Eyeballing US Transpacific Cable Landings"
<<http://cryptome.org/cablew-eyeball.htm>>, 8th July 2002;
"Eyeballing Downtown Manhattan Telephone Hubs"
<<http://cryptome.org/nytel-eyeball.htm>>, 10th July 2002.
- 4 In addition to secret bases, many other more mundane facilities are underground. A great deal of the basic urban infrastructure and utilities needed to service modern living is buried and thus hidden from view. For discussion of the topography of this unseen underground geography in a London context, see Clayton 2000; Pile 2002; Trench and Hillman 1993. There is also growing interest in so called 'urban speleology', the exploration of man-made underground

spaces, see for example the Subterranea Britannica group, <<http://www.subbrit.org.uk/>>.

5 The Guardian newspaper did a short piece on a few secret sites in Britain in 2000, linked to a story on the availability of the first national aerial photography map of the UK, (the 'millennium map'). Lawrence F. and Norton-Taylor R., 2000. "The Russians spent decades getting hold of pictures like these. Now anyone can order them on the net", *The Guardian*, 27th January 2000. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Print/0,3858,3955455,00.html>>

6 For more information on so-called 'chilling' effects on access to public information by governments and private business, see the 'Chilling Effects Clearinghouse', <<http://www.chillingeffects.org/>> and a thorough review by Knezo (2003).

7 This issue is clearly illustrated in this short news article, "UK secret site photos 'must go'", *BBC News Online*, 7th June 2002. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/2030966.stm>>.

8 The website for the exhibition in spring 2002 is at, <<http://www.bl.uk/whatson/exhibitions/lieland/m0-0.html>> and an accompanying book, Carlucci and Barber (2002).

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