

## “Thermite Hypothesis” versus “Controlled Demolition Hypothesis”: a response to “The Scientific Method Applied to the Thermite Hypothesis”

By Arabesque<sup>1</sup>

A review of: *The Scientific Method Applied to the Thermite Hypothesis*<sup>2</sup> by Judy Wood and Morgan Reynolds.

Wood and Reynolds have frequently been critical of Steven Jones’ research into the collapse of the World Trade Center buildings on 9/11. Their “thermite hypothesis” paper is a series of objections against the possible use of thermite in the destruction of the World Trade Center buildings. Many of these objections are answered elsewhere by Frank Legge.<sup>3</sup>

However, there are other problems with their paper. In particular, it is demonstrable that Wood and Reynolds distort the actual position of Steven Jones throughout their essay. This tactic is known as a *straw-man fallacy*:

*“The Straw Man fallacy is committed when a person **simply ignores a person's actual position and substitutes a distorted, exaggerated or misrepresented version of that position.**”<sup>4</sup>*

The *straw-man fallacy* is frequently used to “win” an argument illegitimately. It can also be used unintentionally. However, as Wood and Reynolds have analyzed Steven Jones’ work in the past, they should know the topic they are discussing and therefore they should be aware that they are distorting the position of Steven Jones.<sup>5</sup> From their arguments, it quickly becomes apparent that Wood and Reynolds are attempting to “debunk” the possibility of thermite in the destruction of the World Trade Center Towers with illegitimate arguments based on the *straw-man fallacy*.

Although not openly stated, their misrepresentation of Steven Jones’ position can be summarized as:

*“Steven Jones advocates that thermite is the **only** reason/evidence that the World Trade Center collapsed.”<sup>6</sup>*

This is clear from the very title of their essay (“thermite hypothesis”).

Their entire essay implies that Steven Jones has no other evidence because they fail to acknowledge any. This is significantly misleading as Steven Jones' theory is not exclusively a "*thermite hypothesis*"—it is a "*controlled demolition hypothesis*".

From the abstract of *Why Indeed did the World Trade Center Towers Completely Collapse?*

*"In this paper, I call for a serious investigation of the hypothesis that WTC 7 and the Twin Towers were brought down, not just by impact damage and fires, but **through the use of pre-positioned cutter-charges**. I consider the official FEMA, NIST, and 9-11 Commission reports that fires plus impact damage alone caused complete collapses of all three buildings. And **I present evidence for the controlled-demolition hypothesis**, which is suggested by the available data, and can be tested scientifically, and yet has not been analyzed in any of the reports funded by the US government."*<sup>7</sup>

There is no mention of any "*thermite hypothesis*", or even thermite in the abstract of Jones' paper that investigates the destruction of the World Trade Center Towers and Building 7. As well, Jones' paper gives "***Thirteen Reasons to Challenge Government-sponsored Reports and Investigate the Controlled-demolition Hypothesis.***"<sup>8</sup> Again, there is no mention of thermite in the titles of these sections.

Tellingly, the phrase "*controlled demolition hypothesis*" does not occur one single time in the paper by Wood and Reynolds—although "controlled demolition" makes about 6 rare appearances in a list of 30 objections. Similarly, the phrase "*thermite hypothesis*" does not occur one single time in Steven Jones' paper on the collapse of the World Trade Center Towers.

*Controlled Demolition* has 11 features: all of which are argued by Jones and others<sup>9</sup> to be present in the collapse of the Twin Towers and Building 7:

- Sudden Onset
- Straight-Down Collapse
- Free Fall Speed
- Total Collapse
- Sliced Steel (conveniently manageable pieces)
- Pulverization of Concrete and Other Materials
- Dust Clouds
- Horizontal Ejections
- Demolition Rings

- Explosions
- **Molten metal**

Wood and Reynolds ignore all of this and deceptively imply that Jones' hypothesis is solely based on thermite (i.e. “thermite hypothesis”). Thermite is only a small portion of his complete hypothesis, and is mostly discussed in association with the molten metal found in the rubble of the WTC buildings. Although Wood and Reynolds call Jones’ theory a “*thermite hypothesis*”, they ignore the fact that he has analyzed metal samples which strongly implicate the use of thermite.<sup>10</sup>

Wood and Reynolds misinterpret Steven Jones’ *actual* hypothesis (i.e. a *straw-man fallacy*) and proceed to only challenge the thermite portion of his theory. In essence, they imply that disproving the use of thermite disproves Jones’ entire theory (i.e. controlled demolition). This would be a false conclusion because it ignores the fact that Jones has indicated that more than one type of explosive could have been used in his theory:

*“I maintain that these observations [of molten metal] are consistent with the use of high-temperature cutter charges such as **thermite, HMX or RDX or some combination thereof**, routinely used to melt/cut/demolish steel.”<sup>11</sup>*

From an interview by Jim Fetzer (January 17, 2007):

Jim Fetzer: *Q: “are you suggesting both [**thermite/superthermite**] were used in the Twin Towers?”*

Steven Jones: *A: “I’m suggesting that’s possible **along with other explosives**”<sup>12</sup>*

The authors ignore statements like these, and continuously imply that Steven Jones is arguing a “*thermite-only*” hypothesis.

Wood and Reynolds:

*“Where is the proof that **thermite** has EVER been used to completely pulverize buildings in controlled demolition (**not simply cleaning up debris**)? The mechanisms of cutting and pulverization are mutually exclusive and thermite cuts and melts, it is not explosive. ‘Cutting requires action in one direction,’ says Jeff Strahl, a 9/11 researcher, “while pulverization requires action in all directions.”<sup>13</sup>*

Their *Straw-man* argument in this objection is particularly stunning. Let's say you have a theory. Your theory (**Z**) has 11 components:

1. **A**
2. **B**
3. **C**
4. **D**
5. **E**
6. **F**
7. **G**
8. **H**
9. **I**
10. **J**
11. **K (x, y, etc)**

**K** is comprised of its own elements **x** and possibly others yet to be identified (**y, etc**). This is admitted in the theory. You have also acquired physical and visual evidence that strongly implicates that **x** is indeed present.

Now let's say someone comes along and says your **entire theory** is **x**—ignoring the 11 primary elements of your theory. Imagine someone just called only one part of your theory/evidence your entire “hypothesis”. Imagine that they ignore the fact that **x** is only one component of **K** and can be at least be partially explained by other elements as well. That would be a pretty impressive *straw-man fallacy*.

Wood and Reynolds have committed this *straw-man*:

**Z** represents Steven Jones' “controlled demolition” hypothesis. **A-K** are the 11 features of controlled demolition. **K** represents the **molten metal**. **x** represents **thermite/thermate**, and **y, etc** are **other explosives** (i.e. **RDX**, **HMX**, etc) yet undetermined. Although any of these explosives can explain molten metal, only a chemical thermite reaction has so far reasonably explained the presence of molten metal for weeks after 9/11.

**Thermite/thermate does not explode.**

**Therefore, it would not explain any of the “explosive” features of controlled demolition!** Steven Jones has analyzed molten metal samples which strongly implicate the use of thermate:

- *He is advocating that it can explain **molten metal** for weeks after 9/11.*
- *He is **not** advocating that it can **entirely** explain all 11 features of controlled demolition.*

This is why it is incorrect to imply that disproving the use of thermate invalidates the entire controlled demolition hypothesis. Although superthermite is explosive—Wood and Reynolds are asking specifically here: “*where is the proof that **thermite/thermate** has **EVER** been used to completely pulverize buildings in controlled demolition.*”<sup>14</sup>

In fact, explosives in combination are frequently employed in controlled demolitions.<sup>15</sup> This inconvenient fact was ignored by Wood and Reynolds, and an illogical “thermite-only” *straw-man fallacy* is pursued unmercifully against Jones.

I return these questions to Wood and Reynolds:

- Where is the **evidence** that Steven Jones is maintaining a **thermate-only hypothesis**?
- Where is the **evidence** that controlled demolitions **always use one type** of explosive?

As well as ignoring the possibility of explosives in combination, the entire paper by Wood and Reynolds can be characterized as a *straw-man fallacy* because it is not necessary to know which types of explosives are used to conclude that a *controlled demolition* has taken place. Although the eleven features of controlled demolition are primarily caused by explosives—we can examine these features separately to determine that a controlled demolition has occurred. In other words, free fall speed, molten metal, and other features are independently observable from what caused them. As an example, if we observed the Kingdom crumble to the ground (as it did in a controlled demolition), we would not need to know which types of explosives were used to know that it was a controlled demolition.<sup>16</sup> As David Ray Griffin has said, “*No building exhibiting all the characteristics of controlled demolition has never not been a controlled demolition.*”<sup>17</sup>

The authors ask if the thermate found by Jones was used for cleanup. This ignores that:

1. Thermite is extremely dangerous; it cuts through steel like “a hot knife through butter.”
2. They were trying to find survivors; any cleanup was secondary to finding the victims.
3. Steven Jones has answered this question repeatedly in his presentations. It appears that the authors have ignored this fact.<sup>18</sup>

Did anyone know that there were almost no survivors in the rubble after 9/11? The widespread use of thermite would have endangered any attempts to save lives.

The presence of molten metal<sup>19</sup> in the rubble of the World Trade Center buildings is argued by Jones to be very strong evidence of explosives because jet fuel fires as well as other diffuse flames are incapable of melting steel.<sup>20</sup> Wood and Reynolds have never objected to this assertion in their paper.

The authors fail to rely on physical evidence to discredit Steven Jones’ thermite analysis. Perhaps they should study some molten samples of their own to determine what could have caused “*a phenomenon never before observed in building fires: eutectic reactions, which caused "intergranular melting capable of turning a solid steel girder into Swiss cheese."*”<sup>21</sup> The New York Times described this as “*perhaps the deepest mystery uncovered in the investigation*”.<sup>22</sup> FEMA analyzed samples of molten metal from ground zero that had shown strong evidence of a chemical thermite reaction.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, this report strongly corroborates the work of Steven Jones. Are not Wood and Reynolds interested in solving this “*deep mystery*”? Why is it that Wood and Reynolds do not petition for the release of more molten metal samples held by the government in their list of 30 objections?

## VII. The Scientific Method

In this section, the authors imply that they have used the scientific method while discussing the “thermite hypothesis”. If the *scientific method* does not ignore evidence, why are Judy Wood and Morgan Reynolds ignoring Steven Jones’ position about the possibility of explosives in *combination* with thermite variants as well as the eleven features of controlled demolition?

Strangely, Wood and Reynolds claim that the evidence has “contradicted” the use of thermite. Putting aside all of the aforementioned criticisms, Wood

and Reynolds have made no attempt to explain how molten metal could be present for weeks at ground zero in their objections.

### **VIII. Aluminum Glows**

Wood and Reynolds continue with their often repeated molten aluminum *straw-man fallacy*. The authors proceed to discuss molten aluminum, but curiously fail to provide any context:

*“He fails to account for what molten aluminum looks like **if heated to the same temperatures as molten iron (1538°C)**.”<sup>24</sup>*

Wood and Reynolds neglect to mention that the necessary temperatures needed **are impossible to reach with jet fuel fires as seen in the World Trade Center.**<sup>25</sup> The maximum temperature of a jet fuel fire is 1000°C, far below the temperature that Wood and Reynolds say is required to get aluminum to turn orange. In fact, jet fuel fires are not even capable of melting steel.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore very misleading to say that Steven Jones had not considered these temperatures (1538°C)—why would he when they are impossible to reach with temperatures from a jet fuel fire? As well, the NIST report indicates that the jet fuel fire temperatures were significantly lower than 1000°C—they did not record any evidence of jet fuel fire temperatures over 600°C.<sup>27</sup>

Wood and Reynolds also neglect to mention that a thermite reaction could reach the necessary temperatures to create the observed molten metal/steel that Steven Jones argues is falling outside of the South Tower just before its collapse as seen in video and photographs.<sup>28</sup> Some have claimed that this metal was aluminum from a plane. Jet fuel fires can't cause aluminum to reach the necessary temperatures to “turn orange.” A thermite reaction can reach the necessary temperatures, melt steel and account for this visual evidence. Not only has Steven Jones found traces of thermite in molten metal samples, there is visual evidence further confirming his hypothesis.

### **Conclusions:**

Judy Wood and Morgan Reynolds have failed to discuss Jones' **full hypothesis** in their essay, therefore they have failed to answer his full argument.

Even if the arguments presented by Wood and Reynolds in this essay were completely valid, they do not challenge Steven Jones' controlled demolition hypothesis in any meaningful way. Effectively, their argument attempts to disprove the type of incendiary/explosive/cutter-charge used—**there is no attempt to discredit the possibility of other explosives being used.** Their list of objections completely ignores the fact that Jones' actual theory involves explosives in combination as well as the eleven features of controlled demolition.

Ignoring evidence is not scientific and frequently results in biased and unscientific conclusions. Judy Wood and Morgan Reynolds are entitled to any legitimate criticisms of Steven Jones' work. They are not entitled to distort his positions and present deceptive arguments. As they have written papers on Jones' research in the past, they have no excuse for these misleading arguments.

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<sup>1</sup> [Arabesque](#), Scholars for 9/11 Truth and Justice Member and 9/11 Researcher: <http://www.911blogger.com/blog/877>.

<sup>2</sup> Judy Wood and Morgan Reynolds, [The Scientific Method Applied to the Thermite Hypothesis](#), December 14, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Legge, [A study of some issues raised in a paper by Wood & Reynolds](#), January 11, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Definition of [Straw-man Fallacy](#) taken from [www.nizkor.org](http://www.nizkor.org):

1. Person A has position X.
2. Person B presents position Y (which is a distorted version of X).
3. Person B attacks position Y.
4. Therefore X is false/incorrect/flawed.

*“This sort of “reasoning” is fallacious because **attacking a distorted version of a position simply does not constitute an attack on the position itself.** One might as well expect an attack on a poor drawing of a person to hurt the person.”*

<sup>5</sup> For evidence of this fact read:

Reynolds and Wood, *Why Indeed Did the WTC Buildings Disintegrate?*  
Reynolds and Wood, *Reynolds and Wood try to help Steven E. Jones*,  
August 27, 2006. <http://nomoregames.net/>

<sup>6</sup> No source is provided for this implied assertion.



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<sup>7</sup> Steven Jones, [Why Indeed Did the World Trade Center Buildings Completely Collapse?](#) Page 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. page 5.

<sup>9</sup> David Ray Griffin, [The Destruction of the World Trade Center: Why the Official Account Cannot Be True.](#) Authorized Version (with references & notes). See also:

Steven Jones, [Why Indeed Did the World Trade Center Buildings Completely Collapse?](#), [Word Document](#), <http://www.journalof911studies.com>.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Watson, [Scientific Analysis Proves Towers Brought Down By Incendiaries](#), June 20, 2006. [www.prisonplanet.com](http://www.prisonplanet.com) “using advanced techniques we're finding out what's in these samples [of iron taken from Ground Zero]—we're finding iron, sulphur, potassium and manganese—**these are characteristic of a variation of thermite which is used to cut through steel very rapidly, it's called thermate.**” See also:

Griffin, [The Destruction of the World Trade Center](#) and Jones, [Why Indeed Did the World Trade Center Buildings Completely Collapse?](#)

<sup>11</sup> Jones, [Why Indeed Did the World Trade Center Buildings Completely Collapse?](#) Page 6.

<sup>12</sup> [Interview of Steven Jones by Jim Fetzer on the Dynamic Duo show on gcnlive](#), January 17, 2007.

[http://www.911podcasts.com/files/audio/JimFetzer-StevenJones\\_20070117.mp3](http://www.911podcasts.com/files/audio/JimFetzer-StevenJones_20070117.mp3) Listen to about the 83:00 mark and forward for comment about other explosives in combination with thermate/superthermite.

<sup>13</sup> Wood and Reynolds, [The Scientific Method Applied to the Thermite Hypothesis](#)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. See Proof of Concept: Questions 2 and 3.

<sup>15</sup> [www.Explosionworld.com](http://www.Explosionworld.com), [Did you know?](#) “CONCRETE VS. STEEL: In the United States and Europe, support columns in most buildings are constructed of either steel 'H-beams' or concrete (with steel reinforcing bars). Some buildings actually have both. DID YOU KNOW that these two types of support columns require two completely different types of explosives to cause their 'failure'?”

<sup>16</sup> [www.controlled-demolition.com](http://www.controlled-demolition.com), [Imploding the Kingdome step by step.](#)

<sup>17</sup> Jim Hoffman, [Review of 'A New Standard for Deception' A Presentation by Kevin Ryan](#), October 15, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Steven Jones, [Answers to Objections and Questions](#), pages 75-76.

“Researcher Michael Berger checked with a number of steel-cutters and

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workers at Ground Zero. **They reported that oxy-acetylene torches were used to cut the steel members -- Not thermite.** Also, reacting thermite ejects globs of molten white/orange-hot iron – would cause **VERY dangerous burns!** Therefore, thermite was not used in clean-up.”

<sup>19</sup> FEMA Report: [Appendix C](#) of the [WTC Building Performance Study](#).

See also:

“Engineers have been trying to figure out exactly what happened... ‘**Fire and the structural damage... would not explain steel members in the debris pile that appear to have been partly evaporated**’” from:

James Glanz, [Engineers are baffled over the collapse of 7 WTC; Steel members have been partly evaporated](#), *New York Times*, November 29, 2001.

See also: <http://georgewashington.blogspot.com/2005/12/why-was-there-molten-metal-under.html>

<sup>20</sup> Jones, [Why Indeed Did the World Trade Center Buildings Completely Collapse?](#) page 6.

<sup>21</sup> Joan Killough-Miller, [The ‘Deep Mystery’ of Melted Steel](#), WPI Transformations, Spring 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> FEMA Report: [Appendix C](#) of the [WTC Building Performance Study](#).

<sup>24</sup> Wood and Reynolds, [The Scientific Method Applied to the Thermite Hypothesis](#).

<sup>25</sup> “In combustion science, there are three basic types of flames, namely, a jet burner, a premixed flame, and a diffuse flame.... A fireplace is a diffuse flame burning in air, as was the WTC fire. Diffuse flames generate the lowest heat intensities of the three flame types... **The maximum flame temperature increase for burning hydrocarbons (jet fuel) in air is, thus, about 1000 °C -- hardly sufficient to melt steel at 1500 °C.**” Taken from: Eagar, T. W. and Musso, C. (2001). “Why Did the World Trade Center Collapse?” *Science, Engineering, and Speculation*, *Journal of the Minerals, Metals and Materials Society*, 53/12:8-11 (2001).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Hoffman, [Review of ‘A New Standard for Deception’ A Presentation by Kevin Ryan](#). The NIST reports low fire temperatures.

- “Paint tests indicated low steel temps (480 F [or 280 C]) “despite pre-collapse exposure to fire”
- “Microstructure tests showed no steel reached critical (half-strength) values (600 C)”

[http://911research.wtc7.net/reviews/kevin\\_ryan/newstandard.html](http://911research.wtc7.net/reviews/kevin_ryan/newstandard.html)

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However, these recorded observations by NIST ignore the fact that there was molten metal as reported by the FEMA report. This is hardly surprising since NIST called molten metal “irrelevant” to their investigation. See here: Jim Hoffman, [\*NIST's World Trade Center FAQ A Reply to the National Institute for Standards and Technology's 'Answers to Frequently Asked Questions'\*](#). August 30, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Jones, [\*Why Indeed Did the World Trade Center Buildings Completely Collapse?\*](#) Pages 12-16.