

**Unidentified Flying Objects**

**UFOs**

**Documents of the U.S. Government**

**Compiled and Edited by**

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## About the Editor

Michael Erbschloe has worked for over 30 years performing analysis of the economics of information technology, public policy relating to technology, and utilizing technology in reengineering organization processes. He has authored several books on social and management issues of information technology that were published by McGraw Hill and other major publishers. He has also taught at several universities and developed technology-related curriculum. His career has focused on several interrelated areas:

- Technology strategy, analysis, and forecasting
- Teaching and curriculum development
- Writing books and articles
- Publishing and editing
- Public policy analysis and program evaluation

### Books by Michael Erbschloe

Social Media Warfare: Equal Weapons for All (Auerbach Publications)

Walling Out the Insiders: Controlling Access to Improve Organizational Security (Auerbach Publications)

Physical Security for IT (Elsevier Science)

Trojans, Worms, and Spyware (Butterworth-Heinemann)

Implementing Homeland Security in Enterprise IT (Digital Press)

Guide to Disaster Recovery (Course Technology)

Socially Responsible IT Management (Digital Press)

Information Warfare: How to Survive Cyber Attacks (McGraw Hill)

The Executive's Guide to Privacy Management (McGraw Hill)

Net Privacy: A Guide to Developing & Implementing an e-business Privacy Plan (McGraw Hill)

## Introduction

In 1947, a rash of sightings of unexplained flying objects (UFOs) swept America. Although the newly formed U.S. Air Force was the primary investigator of these sightings, the FBI received many reports and worked for a time with the Air Force to investigate these matters between 1947 and 1954. (<https://vault.fbi.gov/UFO>)

Edwin Aldrin came out in a special on the Science Channel and stated that the astronauts aboard Apollo 11 all saw unidentified objects which seemed to have been following them. He also mentions that they were briefed not to talk about what they had seen. What does NASA have to say in response to this? What were those objects they all saw?

David Morrison talked to Buzz Aldrin on the phone, and he notes that the quotations were taken out of context and did not convey the intended meaning. After the Apollo 11 crew verified that the objects they were seeing was not the SIVB upper stage, which was about 6000 miles away at that time, they concluded that they were probably seeing one of the panels from the separation of the spacecraft from the upper stage. These panels were not tracked from Earth and were likely much closer to the Apollo spacecraft. They chose not to discuss this on the open communications channel since they were concerned that their comments might be misinterpreted (as they are being now). Apparently all of this discussion about the panels was cut from the broadcast interview, thus giving the impression that they had seen a UFO.

(Link: <https://sservi.nasa.gov/?question=buzz-aldrins-ufo-sighting>)

Recently declassified records from the Aeronautical Systems Division, USAF (RG 342 – Records of United States Air Force Commands, Activities, and Organizations) reveal some surprising, perhaps never-before-seen images.

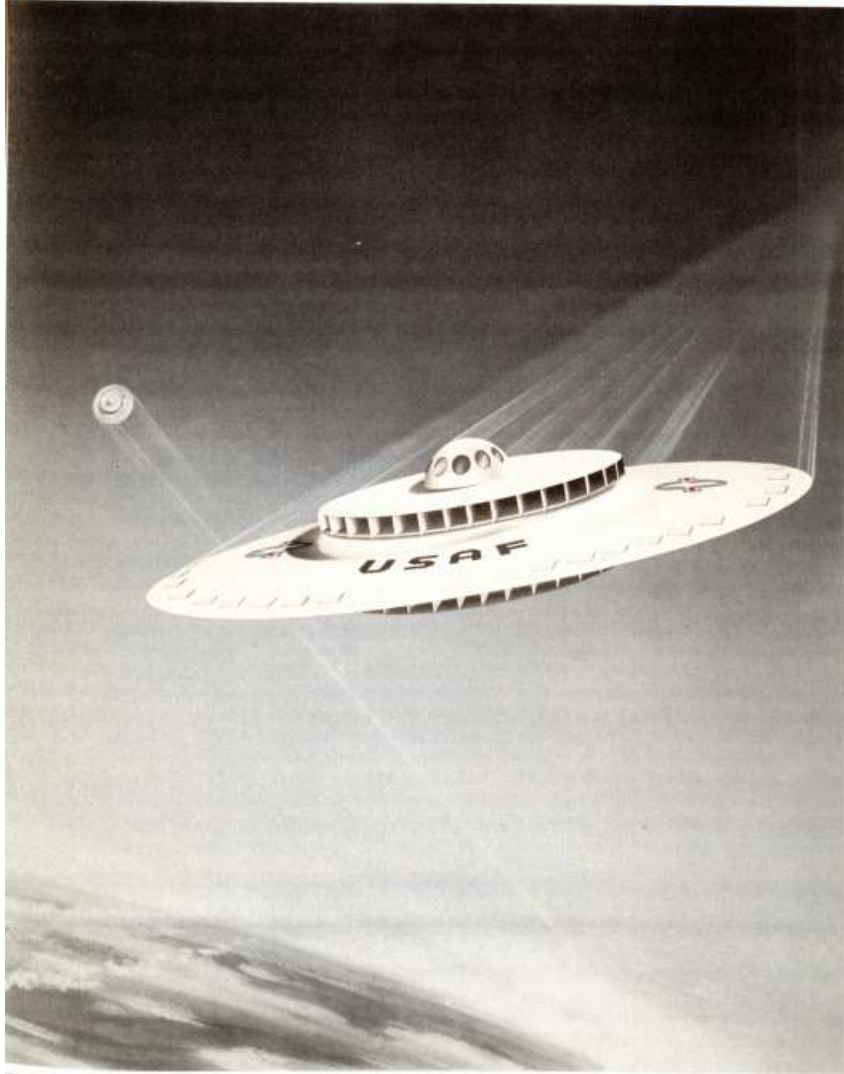
The following illustration was discovered in the pages of a document titled “Project 1794, Final Development Summary Report” (d.1956) The caption reads “USAF Project 1794”. However, the Air Force had contracted the work out to a Canadian company, Avro Aircraft Limited in Ontario, to construct the disk-shaped craft. According to the same report, it was designed to be a vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) plane designed to reach a top speed of Mach 4, with a ceiling of over 100,000 feet, and a range of over 1,000 nautical miles. (Link: <https://declassification.blogs.archives.gov/2012/09/20/how-to-build-a-flying-saucer/>)

~~SECRET~~

AVRO AIRCRAFT LIMITED



PROJECT 1794

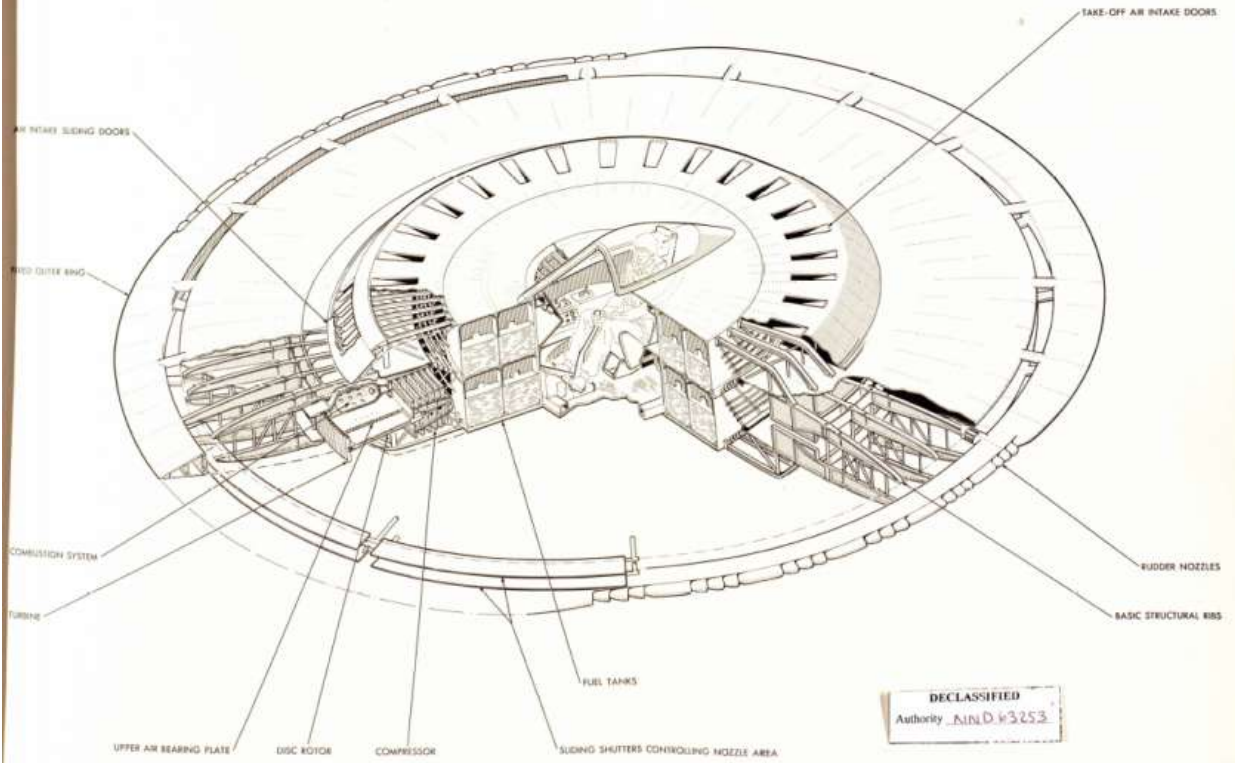


08-704-1

USAF PROJECT 1794

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DECLASSIFIED  
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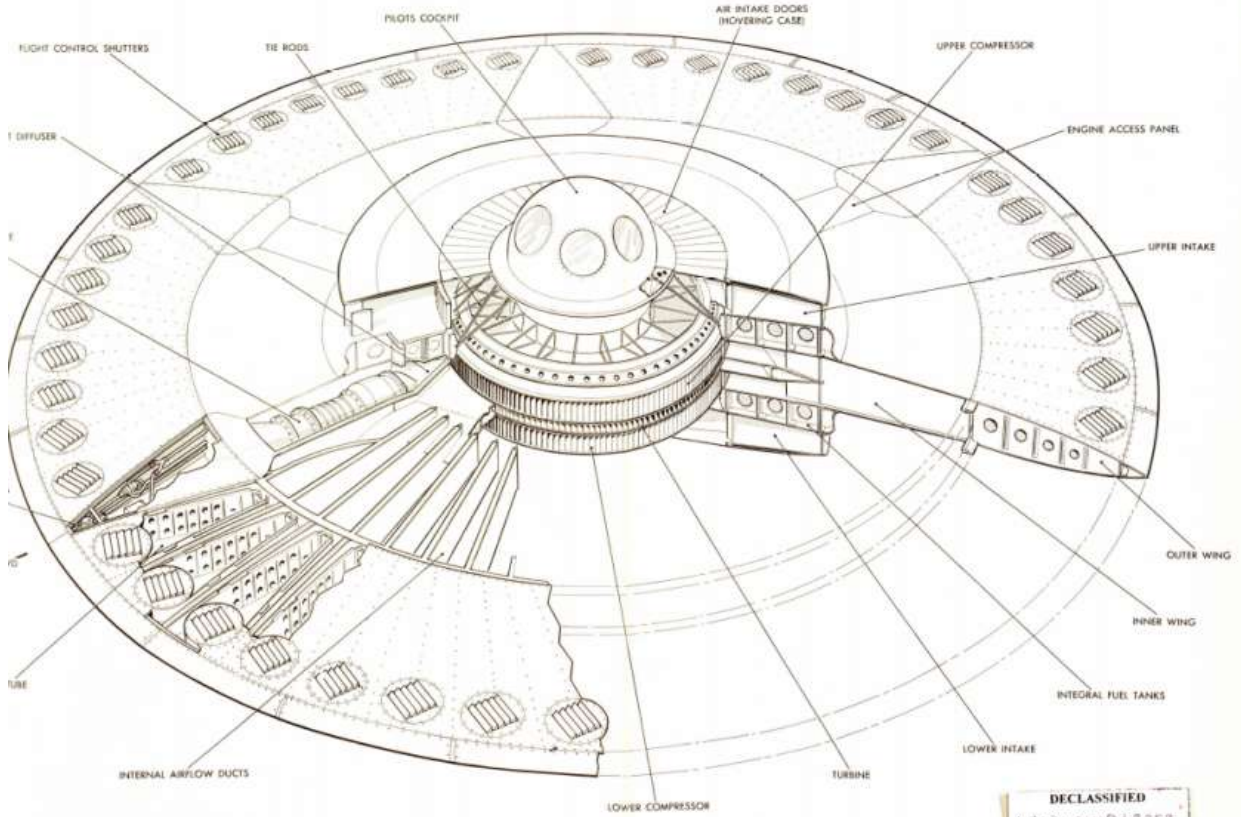


FIG. 2 CUTAWAY OF AIRCRAFT STRUCTURE

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# CIA's Role in the Study of UFOs, 1947-90

## *A Die-Hard Issue*

### Gerald K. Haines

An extraordinary 95 percent of all Americans have at least heard or read something about Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs), and 57 percent believe they are real. [\(1\)](#) Former US Presidents Carter and Reagan claim to have seen a UFO. UFOlogists--a neologism for UFO buffs--and private UFO organizations are found throughout the United States. Many are convinced that the US Government, and particularly CIA, are engaged in a massive conspiracy and coverup of the issue. The idea that CIA has secretly concealed its research into UFOs has been a major theme of UFO buffs since the modern UFO phenomena emerged in the late 1940s. [\(2\)](#)

In late 1993, after being pressured by UFOlogists for the release of additional CIA information on UFOs, [\(3\)](#) DCI R. James Woolsey ordered another review of all Agency files on UFOs. Using CIA records compiled from that review, this study traces CIA interest and involvement in the UFO controversy from the late 1940s to 1990. It chronologically examines the Agency's efforts to solve the mystery of UFOs, its programs that had an impact on UFO sightings, and its attempts to conceal CIA involvement in the entire UFO issue. What emerges from this examination is that, while Agency concern over UFOs was substantial until the early 1950s, CIA has since paid only limited and peripheral attention to the phenomena.

## Background

The emergence in 1947 of the Cold War confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union also saw the first wave of UFO sightings. The first report of a "flying saucer" over the United States came on 24 June 1947, when Kenneth Arnold, a private pilot and reputable businessman, while looking for a downed plane sighted nine disk-shaped objects near Mt. Rainier, Washington, traveling at an estimated speed of over 1,000 mph. Arnold's report was followed by a flood of additional sightings, including reports from military and civilian pilots and air traffic controllers all over the United States. [\(4\)](#) In 1948, Air Force Gen. Nathan Twining, head of the Air Technical Service Command, established Project SIGN (initially named Project SAUCER) to collect, collate, evaluate, and distribute within the government all information relating to such sightings, on the premise that UFOs might be real and of national security concern. [\(5\)](#)

The Technical Intelligence Division of the Air Material Command (AMC) at Wright Field (later Wright-Patterson Air Force Base) in Dayton, Ohio, assumed control of Project SIGN and began its work on 23 January 1948. Although at first fearful that the objects might be Soviet secret weapons, the Air Force soon concluded that UFOs were real but easily explained and not extraordinary. The Air Force report found that almost all sightings stemmed from one or more of three causes: mass hysteria and hallucination, hoax, or misinterpretation of known objects.



Nevertheless, the report recommended continued military intelligence control over the investigation of all sightings and did not rule out the possibility of extraterrestrial phenomena.

[\(6\)](#)

Amid mounting UFO sightings, the Air Force continued to collect and evaluate UFO data in the late 1940s under a new project, GRUDGE, which tried to alleviate public anxiety over UFOs via a public relations campaign designed to persuade the public that UFOs constituted nothing unusual or extraordinary. UFO sightings were explained as balloons, conventional aircraft, planets, meteors, optical illusions, solar reflections, or even "large hailstones." GRUDGE officials found no evidence in UFO sightings of advanced foreign weapons design or development, and they concluded that UFOs did not threaten US security. They recommended that the project be reduced in scope because the very existence of Air Force official interest encouraged people to believe in UFOs and contributed to a "war hysteria" atmosphere. On 27 December 1949, the Air Force announced the project's termination. [\(7\)](#)

With increased Cold War tensions, the Korean war, and continued UFO sightings, USAF Director of Intelligence Maj. Gen. Charles P. Cabell ordered a new UFO project in 1952. Project BLUE BOOK became the major Air Force effort to study the UFO phenomenon throughout the 1950s and 1960s. [\(8\)](#) The task of identifying and explaining UFOs continued to fall on the Air Material Command at Wright-Patterson. With a small staff, the Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC) tried to persuade the public that UFOs were not extraordinary. [\(9\)](#) Projects SIGN, GRUDGE, and BLUE BOOK set the tone for the official US Government position regarding UFOs for the next 30 years.

### [Early CIA Concerns, 1947-52](#)

CIA closely monitored the Air Force effort, aware of the mounting number of sightings and increasingly concerned that UFOs might pose a potential security threat. [\(10\)](#) Given the distribution of the sightings, CIA officials in 1952 questioned whether they might reflect "midsummer madness." [\(11\)](#) Agency officials accepted the Air Force's conclusions about UFO reports, although they concluded that "since there is a remote possibility that they may be interplanetary aircraft, it is necessary to investigate each sighting." [\(12\)](#)

A massive buildup of sightings over the United States in 1952, especially in July, alarmed the Truman administration. On 19 and 20 July, radar scopes at Washington National Airport and Andrews Air Force Base tracked mysterious blips. On 27 July, the blips reappeared. The Air Force scrambled interceptor aircraft to investigate, but they found nothing. The incidents, however, caused headlines across the country. The White House wanted to know what was happening, and the Air Force quickly offered the explanation that the radar blips might be the result of "temperature inversions." Later, a Civil Aeronautics Administration investigation confirmed that such radar blips were quite common and were caused by temperature inversions. [\(13\)](#)

Although it had monitored UFO reports for at least three years, CIA reacted to the new rash of sightings by forming a special study group within the Office of Scientific Intelligence (OSI) and the Office of Current Intelligence (OCI) to review the situation. [\(14\)](#) Edward Tauss, acting chief of OSI's Weapons and Equipment Division, reported for the group that most UFO sightings could be easily explained. Nevertheless, he recommended that the Agency continue monitoring the problem, in coordination with ATIC. He also urged that CIA conceal its interest from the media and the public, "in view of their probable alarmist tendencies" to accept such interest as confirming the existence of UFOs. [\(15\)](#)

Upon receiving the report, Deputy Director for Intelligence (DDI) Robert Amory, Jr. assigned responsibility for the UFO investigations to OSI's Physics and Electronics Division, with A. Ray Gordon as the officer in charge. [\(16\)](#) Each branch in the division was to contribute to the investigation, and Gordon was to coordinate closely with ATIC. Amory, who asked the group to focus on the national security implications of UFOs, was relaying DCI Walter Bedell Smith's concerns. [\(17\)](#) Smith wanted to know whether or not the Air Force investigation of flying saucers was sufficiently objective and how much more money and manpower would be necessary to determine the cause of the small percentage of unexplained flying saucers. Smith believed "there was only one chance in 10,000 that the phenomenon posed a threat to the security of the country, but even that chance could not be taken." According to Smith, it was CIA's responsibility by statute to coordinate the intelligence effort required to solve the problem. Smith also wanted to know what use could be made of the UFO phenomenon in connection with US psychological warfare efforts. [\(18\)](#)

Led by Gordon, the CIA Study Group met with Air Force officials at Wright-Patterson and reviewed their data and findings. The Air Force claimed that 90 percent of the reported sightings were easily accounted for. The other 10 percent were characterized as "a number of incredible reports from credible observers." The Air Force rejected the theories that the sightings involved US or Soviet secret weapons development or that they involved "men from Mars"; there was no evidence to support these concepts. The Air Force briefers sought to explain these UFO reports as the misinterpretation of known objects or little understood natural phenomena. [\(19\)](#) Air Force and CIA officials agreed that outside knowledge of Agency interest in UFOs would make the problem more serious. [\(20\)](#) This concealment of CIA interest contributed greatly to later charges of a CIA conspiracy and coverup.

The CIA Study Group also searched the Soviet press for UFO reports, but found none, causing the group to conclude that the absence of reports had to have been the result of deliberate Soviet Government policy. The group also envisioned the USSR's possible use of UFOs as a psychological warfare tool. In addition, they worried that, if the US air warning system should be deliberately overloaded by UFO sightings, the Soviets might gain a surprise advantage in a nuclear attack. [\(21\)](#)

Because of the tense Cold War situation and increased Soviet capabilities, the CIA Study Group saw serious national security concerns in the flying saucer situation. The group believed that the Soviets could use UFO reports to touch off mass hysteria and panic in the United States. The group also believed that the Soviets might use UFO sightings to overload the US air warning system so that it could not distinguish real targets from phantom UFOs. H. Marshall Chadwell,

Assistant Director of OSI, added that he considered the problem of such importance "that it should be brought to the attention of the National Security Council, in order that a communitywide coordinated effort towards its solution may be initiated." [\(22\)](#)

Chadwell briefed DCI Smith on the subject of UFOs in December 1952. He urged action because he was convinced that "something was going on that must have immediate attention" and that "sightings of unexplained objects at great altitudes and traveling at high speeds in the vicinity of major US defense installations are of such nature that they are not attributable to natural phenomena or known types of aerial vehicles." He drafted a memorandum from the DCI to the National Security Council (NSC) and a proposed NSC Directive establishing the investigation of UFOs as a priority project throughout the intelligence and the defense research and development community. [\(23\)](#) Chadwell also urged Smith to establish an external research project of top-level scientists to study the problem of UFOs. [\(24\)](#) After this briefing, Smith directed DDI Amory to prepare a NSC Intelligence Directive (NSCID) for submission to the NSC on the need to continue the investigation of UFOs and to coordinate such investigations with the Air Force. [\(25\)](#)

### **The Robertson Panel, 1952-53**

On 4 December 1952, the Intelligence Advisory Committee (IAC) took up the issue of UFOs. [\(26\)](#) Amory, as acting chairman, presented DCI Smith's request to the committee that it informally discuss the subject of UFOs. Chadwell then briefly reviewed the situation and the active program of the ATIC relating to UFOs. The committee agreed that the DCI should "enlist the services of selected scientists to review and appraise the available evidence in the light of pertinent scientific theories" and draft an NSCID on the subject. [\(27\)](#) Maj. Gen. John A. Samford, Director of Air Force Intelligence, offered full cooperation. [\(28\)](#)

At the same time, Chadwell looked into British efforts in this area. He learned the British also were active in studying the UFO phenomena. An eminent British scientist, R. V. Jones, headed a standing committee created in June 1951 on flying saucers. Jones' and his committee's conclusions on UFOs were similar to those of Agency officials: the sightings were not enemy aircraft but misrepresentations of natural phenomena. The British noted, however, that during a recent air show RAF pilots and senior military officials had observed a "perfect flying saucer." Given the press response, according to the officer, Jones was having a most difficult time trying to correct public opinion regarding UFOs. The public was convinced they were real. [\(29\)](#)

In January 1953, Chadwell and H. P. Robertson, a noted physicist from the California Institute of Technology, put together a distinguished panel of nonmilitary scientists to study the UFO issue. It included Robertson as chairman; Samuel A. Goudsmit, a nuclear physicist from the Brookhaven National Laboratories; Luis Alvarez, a high-energy physicist; Thornton Page, the deputy director of the Johns Hopkins Operations Research Office and an expert on radar and electronics; and Lloyd Berkner, a director of the Brookhaven National Laboratories and a specialist in geophysics. [\(30\)](#)

The charge to the panel was to review the available evidence on UFOs and to consider the possible dangers of the phenomena to US national security. The panel met from 14 to 17 January 1953. It reviewed Air Force data on UFO case histories and, after spending 12 hours studying the phenomena, declared that reasonable explanations could be suggested for most, if not all, sightings. For example, after reviewing motion-picture film taken of a UFO sighting near Tremonton, Utah, on 2 July 1952 and one near Great Falls, Montana, on 15 August 1950, the panel concluded that the images on the Tremonton film were caused by sunlight reflecting off seagulls and that the images at Great Falls were sunlight reflecting off the surface of two Air Force interceptors. [\(31\)](#)

The panel concluded unanimously that there was no evidence of a direct threat to national security in the UFO sightings. Nor could the panel find any evidence that the objects sighted might be extraterrestrials. It did find that continued emphasis on UFO reporting might threaten "the orderly functioning" of the government by clogging the channels of communication with irrelevant reports and by inducing "hysterical mass behavior" harmful to constituted authority. The panel also worried that potential enemies contemplating an attack on the United States might exploit the UFO phenomena and use them to disrupt US air defenses. [\(32\)](#)

To meet these problems, the panel recommended that the National Security Council debunk UFO reports and institute a policy of public education to reassure the public of the lack of evidence behind UFOs. It suggested using the mass media, advertising, business clubs, schools, and even the Disney corporation to get the message across. Reporting at the height of McCarthyism, the panel also recommended that such private UFO groups as the Civilian Flying Saucer Investigators in Los Angeles and the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization in Wisconsin be monitored for subversive activities. [\(33\)](#)

The Robertson panel's conclusions were strikingly similar to those of the earlier Air Force project reports on SIGN and GRUDGE and to those of the CIA's own OSI Study Group. All investigative groups found that UFO reports indicated no direct threat to national security and no evidence of visits by extraterrestrials.

Following the Robertson panel findings, the Agency abandoned efforts to draft an NSCID on UFOs. [\(34\)](#) The Scientific Advisory Panel on UFOs (the Robertson panel) submitted its report to the IAC, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of the Federal Civil Defense Administration, and the Chairman of the National Security Resources Board. CIA officials said no further consideration of the subject appeared warranted, although they continued to monitor sightings in the interest of national security. Philip Strong and Fred Durant from OSI also briefed the Office of National Estimates on the findings. [\(35\)](#) CIA officials wanted knowledge of any Agency interest in the subject of flying saucers carefully restricted, noting not only that the Robertson panel report was classified but also that any mention of CIA sponsorship of the panel was forbidden. This attitude would later cause the Agency major problems relating to its credibility. [\(36\)](#)

## The 1950s: Fading CIA Interest in UFOs

After the report of the Robertson panel, Agency officials put the entire issue of UFOs on the back burner. In May 1953, Chadwell transferred chief responsibility for keeping abreast of UFOs to OSI's Physics and Electronic Division, while the Applied Science Division continued to provide any necessary support. [\(37\)](#) Todos M. Odarenko, chief of the Physics and Electronics Division, did not want to take on the problem, contending that it would require too much of his division's analytic and clerical time. Given the findings of the Robertson panel, he proposed to consider the project "inactive" and to devote only one analyst part-time and a file clerk to maintain a reference file of the activities of the Air Force and other agencies on UFOs. Neither the Navy nor the Army showed much interest in UFOs, according to Odarenko. [\(38\)](#)

A nonbeliever in UFOs, Odarenko sought to have his division relieved of the responsibility for monitoring UFO reports. In 1955, for example, he recommended that the entire project be terminated because no new information concerning UFOs had surfaced. Besides, he argued, his division was facing a serious budget reduction and could not spare the resources. [\(39\)](#) Chadwell and other Agency officials, however, continued to worry about UFOs. Of special concern were overseas reports of UFO sightings and claims that German engineers held by the Soviets were developing a "flying saucer" as a future weapon of war. [\(40\)](#)

To most US political and military leaders, the Soviet Union by the mid-1950s had become a dangerous opponent. Soviet progress in nuclear weapons and guided missiles was particularly alarming. In the summer of 1949, the USSR had detonated an atomic bomb. In August 1953, only nine months after the United States tested a hydrogen bomb, the Soviets detonated one. In the spring of 1953, a top secret RAND Corporation study also pointed out the vulnerability of SAC bases to a surprise attack by Soviet long-range bombers. Concern over the danger of a Soviet attack on the United States continued to grow, and UFO sightings added to the uneasiness of US policymakers.

Mounting reports of UFOs over eastern Europe and Afghanistan also prompted concern that the Soviets were making rapid progress in this area. CIA officials knew that the British and Canadians were already experimenting with "flying saucers." Project Y was a Canadian-British-US developmental operation to produce a nonconventional flying-saucer-type aircraft, and Agency officials feared the Soviets were testing similar devices. [\(41\)](#)

Adding to the concern was a flying saucer sighting by US Senator Richard Russell and his party while traveling on a train in the USSR in October 1955. After extensive interviews of Russell and his group, however, CIA officials concluded that Russell's sighting did not support the theory that the Soviets had developed saucerlike or unconventional aircraft. Herbert Scoville, Jr., the Assistant Director of OSI, wrote that the objects observed probably were normal jet aircraft in a steep climb. [\(42\)](#)

Wilton E. Lexow, head of the CIA's Applied Sciences Division, was also skeptical. He questioned why the Soviets were continuing to develop conventional-type aircraft if they had a "flying saucer." [\(43\)](#) Scoville asked Lexow to assume responsibility for fully assessing the

capabilities and limitations of nonconventional aircraft and to maintain the OSI central file on the subject of UFOs.

### CIA's U-2 and OXCART as UFOs

In November 1954, CIA had entered into the world of high technology with its U-2 overhead reconnaissance project. Working with Lockheed's Advanced Development facility in Burbank, California, known as the Skunk Works, and Kelly Johnson, an eminent aeronautical engineer, the Agency by August 1955 was testing a high-altitude experimental aircraft--the U-2. It could fly at 60,000 feet; in the mid-1950s, most commercial airliners flew between 10,000 feet and 20,000 feet. Consequently, once the U-2 started test flights, commercial pilots and air traffic controllers began reporting a large increase in UFO sightings. [\(44\)](#) (U)

The early U-2s were silver (they were later painted black) and reflected the rays from the sun, especially at sunrise and sunset. They often appeared as fiery objects to observers below. Air Force BLUE BOOK investigators aware of the secret U-2 flights tried to explain away such sightings by linking them to natural phenomena such as ice crystals and temperature inversions. By checking with the Agency's U-2 Project Staff in Washington, BLUE BOOK investigators were able to attribute many UFO sightings to U-2 flights. They were careful, however, not to reveal the true cause of the sighting to the public.

According to later estimates from CIA officials who worked on the U-2 project and the OXCART (SR-71, or Blackbird) project, over half of all UFO reports from the late 1950s through the 1960s were accounted for by manned reconnaissance flights (namely the U-2) over the United States. [\(45\)](#) This led the Air Force to make misleading and deceptive statements to the public in order to allay public fears and to protect an extraordinarily sensitive national security project. While perhaps justified, this deception added fuel to the later conspiracy theories and the coverup controversy of the 1970s. The percentage of what the Air Force considered unexplained UFO sightings fell to 5.9 percent in 1955 and to 4 percent in 1956. [\(46\)](#)

At the same time, pressure was building for the release of the Robertson panel report on UFOs. In 1956, Edward Ruppelt, former head of the Air Force BLUE BOOK project, publicly revealed the existence of the panel. A best-selling book by UFOlogist Donald Keyhoe, a retired Marine Corps major, advocated release of all government information relating to UFOs. Civilian UFO groups such as the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) and the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO) immediately pushed for release of the Robertson panel report. [\(47\)](#) Under pressure, the Air Force approached CIA for permission to declassify and release the report. Despite such pressure, Philip Strong, Deputy Assistant Director of OSI, refused to declassify the report and declined to disclose CIA sponsorship of the panel. As an alternative, the Agency prepared a sanitized version of the report which deleted any reference to CIA and avoided mention of any psychological warfare potential in the UFO controversy. [\(48\)](#)

The demands, however, for more government information about UFOs did not let up. On 8 March 1958, Keyhoe, in an interview with Mike Wallace of CBS, claimed deep CIA



involvement with UFOs and Agency sponsorship of the Robertson panel. This prompted a series of letters to the Agency from Keyhoe and Dr. Leon Davidson, a chemical engineer and UFOlogist. They demanded the release of the full Robertson panel report and confirmation of CIA involvement in the UFO issue. Davidson had convinced himself that the Agency, not the Air Force, carried most of the responsibility for UFO analysis and that "the activities of the US Government are responsible for the flying saucer sightings of the last decade." Indeed, because of the undisclosed U-2 and OXCART flights, Davidson was closer to the truth than he suspected. CI, nevertheless held firm to its policy of not revealing its role in UFO investigations and refused to declassify the full Robertson panel report. [\(49\)](#)

In a meeting with Air Force representatives to discuss how to handle future inquires such as Keyhoe's and Davidson's, Agency officials confirmed their opposition to the declassification of the full report and worried that Keyhoe had the ear of former DCI VAdm. Roscoe Hillenkoetter, who served on the board of governors of NICAP. They debated whether to have CIA General Counsel Lawrence R. Houston show Hillenkoetter the report as a possible way to defuse the situation. CIA officer Frank Chapin also hinted that Davidson might have ulterior motives, "some of them perhaps not in the best interest of this country," and suggested bringing in the FBI to investigate. [\(50\)](#) Although the record is unclear whether the FBI ever instituted an investigation of Davidson or Keyhoe, or whether Houston ever saw Hillenkoetter about the Robertson report, Hillenkoetter did resign from the NICAP in 1962. [\(51\)](#)

The Agency was also involved with Davidson and Keyhoe in two rather famous UFO cases in the 1950s, which helped contribute to a growing sense of public distrust of CIA with regard to UFOs. One focused on what was reported to have been a tape recording of a radio signal from a flying saucer; the other on reported photographs of a flying saucer. The "radio code" incident began innocently enough in 1955, when two elderly sisters in Chicago, Mildred and Marie Maier, reported in the *Journal of Space Flight* their experiences with UFOs, including the recording of a radio program in which an unidentified code was reportedly heard. The sisters taped the program and other ham radio operators also claimed to have heard the "space message." OSI became interested and asked the Scientific Contact Branch to obtain a copy of the recording. [\(52\)](#)

Field officers from the Contact Division (CD), one of whom was Dewelt Walker, made contact with the Maier sisters, who were "thrilled that the government was interested," and set up a time to meet with them. [\(53\)](#) In trying to secure the tape recording, the Agency officers reported that they had stumbled upon a scene from *Arsenic and Old Lace*. "The only thing lacking was the elderberry wine," Walker cabled Headquarters. After reviewing the sisters' scrapbook of clippings from their days on the stage, the officers secured a copy of the recording. [\(54\)](#) OSI analyzed the tape and found it was nothing more than Morse code from a US radio station.

The matter rested there until UFOlogist Leon Davidson talked with the Maier sisters in 1957. The sisters remembered they had talked with a Mr. Walker who said he was from the US Air Force. Davidson then wrote to a Mr. Walker, believing him to be a US Air Force Intelligence Officer from Wright-Patterson, to ask if the tape had been analyzed at ATIC. Dewelt Walker replied to Davidson that the tape had been forwarded to proper authorities for evaluation, and no information was available concerning the results. Not satisfied, and suspecting that Walker was

really a CIA officer, Davidson next wrote DCI Allen Dulles demanding to learn what the coded message revealed and who Mr. Walker was. [\(55\)](#) The Agency, wanting to keep Walker's identity as a CIA employee secret, replied that another agency of the government had analyzed the tape in question and that Davidson would be hearing from the Air Force. [\(56\)](#) On 5 August, the Air Force wrote Davidson saying that Walker "was and is an Air Force Officer" and that the tape "was analyzed by another government organization." The Air Force letter confirmed that the recording contained only identifiable Morse code which came from a known US-licensed radio station. [\(57\)](#)

Davidson wrote Dulles again. This time he wanted to know the identity of the Morse operator and of the agency that had conducted the analysis. CIA and the Air Force were now in a quandary. The Agency had previously denied that it had actually analyzed the tape. The Air Force had also denied analyzing the tape and claimed that Walker was an Air Force officer. CIA officers, under cover, contacted Davidson in Chicago and promised to get the code translation and the identification of the transmitter, if possible. [\(58\)](#)

In another attempt to pacify Davidson, a CIA officer, again under cover and wearing his Air Force uniform, contacted Davidson in New York City. The CIA officer explained that there was no super agency involved and that Air Force policy was not to disclose who was doing what. While seeming to accept this argument, Davidson nevertheless pressed for disclosure of the recording message and the source. The officer agreed to see what he could do. [\(59\)](#) After checking with Headquarters, the CIA officer phoned Davidson to report that a thorough check had been made and, because the signal was of known US origin, the tape and the notes made at the time had been destroyed to conserve file space. [\(60\)](#)

Incensed over what he perceived was a runaround, Davidson told the CIA officer that "he and his agency, whichever it was, were acting like Jimmy Hoffa and the Teamster Union in destroying records which might indict them." [\(61\)](#) Believing that any more contact with Davidson would only encourage more speculation, the Contact Division washed its hands of the issue by reporting to the DCI and to ATIC that it would not respond to or try to contact Davidson again. [\(62\)](#) Thus, a minor, rather bizarre incident, handled poorly by both CIA and the Air Force, turned into a major flap that added fuel to the growing mystery surrounding UFOs and CIA's role in their investigation.

Another minor flap a few months later added to the growing questions surrounding the Agency's true role with regard to flying saucers. CIA's concern over secrecy again made matters worse. In 1958, Major Keyhoe charged that the Agency was deliberately asking eyewitnesses of UFOs not to make their sightings public. [\(63\)](#)

The incident stemmed from a November 1957 request from OSI to the CD to obtain from Ralph C. Mayher, a photographer for KYW-TV in Cleveland, Ohio, certain photographs he took in 1952 of an unidentified flying object. Harry Real, a CD officer, contacted Mayher and obtained copies of the photographs for analysis. On 12 December 1957, John Hazen, another CD officer, returned the five photographs of the alleged UFO to Mayher without comment. Mayher asked Hazen for the Agency's evaluation of the photos, explaining that he was trying to organize a TV program to brief the public on UFOs. He wanted to mention on the show that a US intelligence



organization had viewed the photographs and thought them of interest. Although he advised Mayher not to take this approach, Hazen stated that Mayher was a US citizen and would have to make his own decision as to what to do. [\(64\)](#)

Keyhoe later contacted Mayher, who told him his story of CIA and the photographs. Keyhoe then asked the Agency to confirm Hazen's employment in writing, in an effort to expose CIA's role in UFO investigations. The Agency refused, despite the fact that CD field representatives were normally overt and carried credentials identifying their Agency association. DCI Dulles's aide, John S. Earman, merely sent Keyhoe a noncommittal letter noting that, because UFOs were of primary concern to the Department of the Air Force, the Agency had referred his letter to the Air Force for an appropriate response. Like the response to Davidson, the Agency reply to Keyhoe only fueled the speculation that the Agency was deeply involved in UFO sightings. Pressure for release of CIA information on UFOs continued to grow. [\(65\)](#)

Although CIA had a declining interest in UFO cases, it continued to monitor UFO sightings. Agency officials felt the need to keep informed on UFOs if only to alert the DCI to the more sensational UFO reports and flaps. [\(66\)](#)

### **The 1960s: Declining CIA Involvement and Mounting Controversy**

In the early 1960s, Keyhoe, Davidson, and other UFOlogists maintained their assault on the Agency for release of UFO information. Davidson now claimed that CIA "was solely responsible for creating the Flying Saucer furor as a tool for cold war psychological warfare since 1951." Despite calls for Congressional hearings and the release of all materials relating to UFOs, little changed. [\(67\)](#)

In 1964, however, following high-level White House discussions on what to do if an alien intelligence was discovered in space and a new outbreak of UFO reports and sightings, DCI John McCone asked for an updated CIA evaluation of UFOs. Responding to McCone's request, OSI asked the CD to obtain various recent samples and reports of UFO sightings from NICAP. With Keyhoe, one of the founders, no longer active in the organization, CIA officers met with Richard H. Hall, the acting director. Hall gave the officers samples from the NICAP database on the most recent sightings. [\(68\)](#)

After OSI officers had reviewed the material, Donald F. Chamberlain, OSI Assistant Director, assured McCone that little had changed since the early 1950s. There was still no evidence that UFOs were a threat to the security of the United States or that they were of "foreign origin." Chamberlain told McCone that OSI still monitored UFO reports, including the official Air Force investigation, Project BLUE BOOK. [\(69\)](#)

At the same time that CIA was conducting this latest internal review of UFOs, public pressure forced the Air Force to establish a special ad hoc committee to review BLUE BOOK. Chaired by Dr. Brian O'Brien, a member of the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board, the panel included Carl Sagan, the famous astronomer from Cornell University. Its report offered nothing new. It

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