

## INVITED ESSAY

# UFOs and NASA

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**Abstract**—In 1977 President Carter's Science Advisor recommended that a small panel of inquiry be formed by NASA to see if there had been any new significant findings on UFOs since the US Air Force-sponsored investigation of UFOs ("Condon Report") a decade earlier. Five months later, NASA responded to that recommendation by proposing "to take no steps to establish a research activity in this area or to convene a symposium on the subject." This article offers a partial inside look at how that decision was made at NASA.

### Introduction

Forty years ago Kenneth Arnold's sighting of "flying saucers" inaugurated the modern era of observation of Unidentified Flying Objects, or UFOs. The possibility that some UFOs are actually spacecraft, bearing intelligent beings from another world, has focused intense public interest on the subject.

While only a very small number of reputable scientists has ever taken UFOs seriously, the related search for radio signals from other civilizations has slowly increased in "respectability" over the decades following the pioneering suggestion of such searches by Cocconi and Morrison (1959). A turning point occurred, however, when Hart (1975), and Tipler (1980), argued convincingly that an intelligent civilization in the galaxy would rapidly physically colonize the galaxy (see also Jones, 1981). Their suggested conclusion is that we are in fact the only civilization in our galaxy, if not the Universe.

An alternative conclusion is that one should perhaps take more seriously the possibility that some UFO reports do represent manifestations of galactic intelligence.

The canonical study of that possibility is "Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects" (Condon & Gillmor, 1968), the so-called "Condon Report," which concluded, despite Condon's clearly negative feelings about the value of UFO study, that of 59 cases studied, two involved "probable UFOs" and two "possible UFOs" (Sturrock, 1987).

Over the second half of the year 1977, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration found itself, as a result of a letter from the White House, considering whether more should be done on the subject of UFOs, and in particular, whether NASA should do it.

NASA's final response, which came at the end of 1977, was worded cautiously, but in effect said "no" to the White House. The present paper bears on how NASA coped with the White House request.

Acceptance by the establishment of the notion that alien intelligences are active in the vicinity of the Earth, would involve a profound change in a fundamental paradigm that governs our activity as a society. (For example, President Reagan has remarked, to Mikhail Gorbachev, that American and Soviet societies would bury their differences if the world were threatened by an alien intelligence.)

Also, NASA has a large science constituency. According to a *Science Magazine* report (16 December, 1977, p. 1128) "NASA seems to fear that the reopening of the question of the genuineness of visitors from outer space will legitimize a subject most establishment scientists consider phony and a waste of time."

How exactly did NASA cope with this "hot potato," and why did NASA decline the White House request? In the next section I describe NASA's interaction with the White House, and in the following section I specify more completely the aim of the present paper. The remainder of the paper details aspects of NASA's activity in dealing with the White House request.

### UFOs: NASA and the White House

On July 21, 1977, Dr. Frank Press, Science Advisor to President Jimmy Carter, sent a "Dear Bob" letter to Dr. Robert Frosch, Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The letter opens by indicating that the White House "is becoming a focal point for an increasing number of inquiries concerning UFO's," and Press suggests that NASA should instead become the focal point for general correspondence, and that those inquiries which come to the White House henceforth be sent to the designated desk at NASA.

Press goes on, however, to say that "since it has been nearly a decade since the Condan (sic) report, I believe that a small panel of inquiry could be formed to see if there are any new significant findings" on the subject of UFOs. He suggested that the panel of inquiry "could be formed by NASA," and stated that "since this is a public relations problem as much as anything else, people who are known to be interested in the problem and also highly known, such as Carl Sagan, ought to be involved."

His letter is reproduced at the end of the paper as Appendix 1.

NASA, and the country, were aware that President Carter himself had once reported a UFO sighting. In an early draft of an Information Sheet (Number 78-1), prepared in early 1978 (that is, following NASA's responses to Press's letters), NASA described Carter's sighting as follows:

**PRESIDENT CARTER'S UFO SIGHTING**— While serving as Governor of Georgia, Mr. Carter reported to NICAP that he had seen a bright, moving object in the sky over Leary, GA in October 1969. He said the object was visible for 10 to 12 minutes

and, at one point, shone as brightly as the Moon. The regional NICAP representative investigated the sighting and reported there was no evidence to support anything beyond placing what Mr. Carter saw in its "unidentified" category.

Thus, it could not be completely clear to Dr. Frosch exactly what the significance of Press's letter was—simply an attempt to clear Press's desk of mail that he was not equipped to answer, or a White House expression of real interest in UFOs.

Frosch responded to Press on September 6, 1977 (Appendix 2), indicating that NASA was "inclined to agree with your recommendation," but indicating that "there are a number of questions that need to be resolved before any formal program is undertaken." In particular he noted that "a panel of inquiry such as you suggest . . . would require some additional resources [money] for the inquiry and for follow on activity . . . we should assure ourselves that an inquiry is justified. I believe we could do this by naming a NASA project officer to review reports of the last ten years and to provide a specific recommendation relative to any further inquiry by the end of this year. If you concur, I will initiate this action." He enclosed, for Press's information, a NASA Information Sheet (76-6) on "Unidentified Flying Objects" (Appendix 3). Press gave the requested concurrence on September 14, 1977 (Appendix 4).

Then, on December 21, 1977, Frosch, in a remarkable letter to Press, "proposed" that "NASA take no steps to establish a research activity in this area [UFO's] or to convene a symposium on the subject" (Appendix 5). There is no mention of a project officer, or of any review "of reports of the last ten years," but Frosch indicates that "we have given considerable thought to the question of what else the United States might and should do in the area of UFO research. There is an absence of tangible or physical evidence available for thorough laboratory analysis," and he indicates that "we stand ready to respond to any *bona fide* physical evidence . . ."

### **Purpose of This Paper**

What happened within NASA, resulting in the two letters that Frosch wrote to Press? How does a government agency formulate a response to, in effect, the President of the United States, on a topic of the peculiar sensitivity, interest, and controversial nature, as UFOs? It is the purpose of the present paper not to actually answer that question, but to provide information bearing on that question. To actually answer the question, as we shall see, would require substantial additional information from many individuals. Thus, the present paper represents an "interim report" that might be followed in the future by a more global inquiry by others.

In order to understand why this paper is not more comprehensive, it is necessary to understand how NASA works, and its structure.

## NASA

NASA is a large organization, with Centers in various parts of the country. In 1976 (but to a much lesser extent today) the Directors of the various Centers played a powerful role in NASA policy making. Apart from those specific individuals, however, NASA policy making was concentrated entirely in persons at NASA Headquarters in Washington, DC.

The structure of NASA Headquarters, as of January 1978, is shown in Figure 1. From October 1976, to August 1978, I was Deputy to Mr. Bland Norris, Director of the Astrophysics Division, which was part of the Office of Space Science; that Office was directed by the Associate Administrator for Space Science, Dr. Noel W. Hinners; his Deputy was Mr. Tony Calio. Hinners reported directly to the Administrator, as did Dr. John Naugle, Science Advisor. Policy making stopped with Hinners, all of us below being providers of information and advice, and executors of policy.

NASA Headquarters was an interesting and, to an academic person, strange place. It had a great degree of vertical structure. Hinners would occasionally, and in an almost embarrassed manner, stroll around the fifth floor from the "front office" he inhabited. The Administrator (on the seventh floor) was even more inhibited—an Administrator's ramble in the building was a formal, prepared, activity. Such things did not happen often. This was not a reflection of the personalities of the two men (in fact both are personally warm, intelligent, and charming); it was a product of the institutional structure of NASA itself.

Coherence of policy and activity was maintained in a clever, effective way, best illustrated by an example. Suppose that scientist John Doe writes an angry letter to someone at some level in NASA. The letter is immediately copied (often without the recipient even seeing it) and sent to all the lowest levels in Headquarters that the secretary deems relevant, considering the content of the letter (Naugle joked that he had once received a letter from an old girlfriend, "and it had gone everywhere, since the subjects were so general!"). A draft reply is generated by the lowest-level person on the distribution, and this draft works its way up through the entire organization for, finally, signature and mailing by the original recipient (who now reads the letter perhaps for the first time). At any point in the chain, the draft reply letter may be rewritten by the higher official. Each level must concur with the version sent higher, by initialing in the appropriate place.

This system works extremely well. Everyone in NASA Headquarters who needs to know about the letter knows it, and attempts from outside to set the system against itself are doomed. This same mechanism is often used in areas of policy, to obtain comment from many levels.

The result of this vertical structure, however, is that it often is not clear in the end just where the policy that is "signed off on" by the responsible senior official actually originated, or what precisely motivated specific items or changes in items. Each individual sees only what flows up or down through

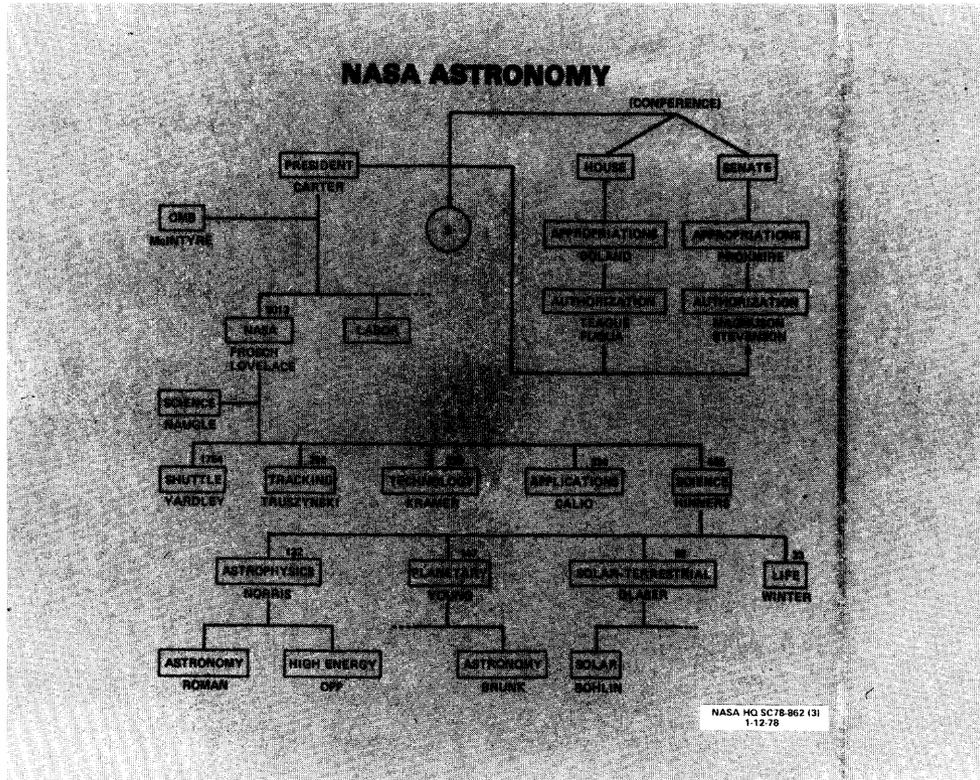


Fig. 1. The structure of policy making, policy administration, and funding, with regard to NASA, in January 1978. Numbers indicate annual budget in hundreds of millions of dollars.

his or her level, not the total picture, which is seen by no one. This of course holds true in the case of my personal perspective on the NASA-White House UFO activity. Thus, in the present paper on NASA's activity regarding the UFO question, I can only present certain documents, and attempt a little detective work toward the question of "who shot John?", that is, who made the basic NASA decision concerning UFOs, a decision apparently still in force today. Let us begin.

### The Author at NASA

Bland Norris telephoned me (I was an Associate Professor at The Johns Hopkins University) from Woods Hole during the summer of 1976, and in effect offered me the position of his Deputy. He was almost certainly influenced to do this by George Field, the eminent astronomer who was then head of the Physical Science Committee (PSC) (the internal NASA Committee advisory to Hinners). At Woods Hole a high-level group was studying the Hornig Committee report on the proposed management structure for the proposed Space Telescope, and some of the group apparently felt that having a scientist (such as myself) from the astrophysics community move to NASA Headquarters for a few years would help in "selling" the Space Telescope to the Office of Management and Budget, and Congress. Norris, an excellent engineer and administrator, had no knowledge of astrophysics (although he did take a Community College night course in astronomy during my period at NASA). On my arrival at Headquarters, I found that in fact Space Telescope was in excellent hands with Warren Keller and Nancy Roman. Indeed, a pleasant surprise was the uniformly excellent quality of people I found in the Office of Space Science.

At about the same time that I arrived, David Morrison, a well-known scientist from the University of Hawaii, came to occupy a roughly similar position in the Planetary Division. Morrison was to try to sell Galileo (a mission to the planet Jupiter), while I sold Space Telescope, and there was friendly rivalry between us. (Both Space Telescope and Galileo did succeed in becoming approved missions but—a decade later—neither has been launched.)

Shortly after my arrival at NASA, Hinners' Deputy, Tony Calio, strolled down the hall to my office with something on his mind. I did not know, yet, how unusual this was. He wanted someone to handle SETI, the "Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence," and he had fixed on me. As this subject is clearly relevant to NASA's attitude toward UFOs, I will expand on this, my earlier (and later) involvement with SETI.

John Billingham, at NASA's Ames Research Center, was the person who was focusing an attempt to get NASA to fund, and indeed to carry out, a radio search for extraterrestrial intelligence. A detailed report, funded by NASA (Morrison, Billingham, & Wolfe, 1977) was in preparation. Calio asked me to look into the matter and recommend whether the Office of

Space Science should fund SETI, and at what level. An interesting complication was that NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) had a different approach to SETI than had Ames, and wanted to carry out its program. In essence, Ames wanted to look with very great sensitivity at small numbers of nearby stars, at specific frequencies which Ames had somehow deduced would be used by other civilizations, while JPL wanted to survey the whole sky at a vast number of frequencies, paying the price, of course, of greatly reduced sensitivity. I quickly became convinced that the JPL approach was the right one, and that the Ames approach was a waste of money. It seemed to me that it was not right for the young, new, poor civilization (us) to have to spend taxpayers' money to get great receiving sensitivity; instead, the old, experienced, rich civilization (them) should spend the money to get great transmitting power. Also, I felt that if there were civilizations broadcasting from nearby stars, we would already know it; that in fact they would be aware of us and might even be here (UFOs?).

A good indication of my attitude on these matters is given by the letter I wrote (Appendix 6) to Major Ret. Colman S. Von Keviczky, in reply to his letter (Appendix 7) to Ichtiaque Rasool (who was Hinners' personal science advisor).

Billingham pressed me hard to come up with some immediate funding for his SETI activity and, quite remarkably, I was able to do so. Someone had told me that the front office had some few hundred thousand dollars available, as a result of some reprogramming. This was unusual; normally only the lowest level people at NASA Headquarters actually had money, and if you tried to take it from them, they made you very aware of how much damage you were doing. Ed Wash, Hinners' excellent financial man, told me in his usual worried way that he had wanted to reserve the reprogramming money for solar sailing (which was about to enter a "shoot-out" with the solar electric propulsion over which was to become the planetary program propulsion "new technology" of the 1980's—rather pathetic in retrospect!). However, he gave me half the money, which I gave to Ames.

In formulating our budget for the next fiscal year, Norris and I placed the JPL program adjacent to, but above, the Ames program, with both of them right at the very bottom of our Astrophysics Budget priorities, and then we sent the budget up to Hinners for possible re-prioritization and for merging of our budget with those of the Planetary, Solar-Terrestrial, and Life Sciences (see Figure 1) Divisions.

Tony Calio himself was quite enthusiastic on the subject of SETI. Hinners was considerably less enthusiastic; in fact Calio told me at one point "this is the only thing Noel and I have ever come apart on." Possibly Hinners did lack belief in the reasonableness of SETI, but I suspect that his greatest concern was for the stature of his science program and its prospects. At a public lecture at Princeton, Hinners asked the audience to "vote" as to whether SETI represented a proper use of public funds (they agreed it did).

It was my understanding, some weeks after budget submission, that I had

won a victory, albeit a Pyrrhic one: The NASA budget that emerged, and was sent to the President's Office of Management and Budget (OMB), contained only the JPL program, but unfortunately at too low a priority level to survive OMB. I was astonished that when the budget was returned from OMB, SETI was still included; that is, it had been moved to a sufficiently higher position in the Carter "zero-based budgeting" priority that it had survived OMB's financial knife.

This is a vivid example of how one can seldom be certain of "who shot John." For example, at whose level was the JPL program separated from the Ames program? Hinners? Frosch? And who at OMB did the reprioritizing, and why? On the latter question, I was able to obtain some information, much later. On May 17, 1978, Alan Lovelace, Frosch's Deputy, wrote to W. Bowman Cutter, Executive Associate Director for Budget, Office of Management and Budget, inviting him to come over to NASA Headquarters some evening for dinner, and an informal briefing on astronomy by me and David Morrison. Cutter had apparently expressed an interest in such a briefing some time in April. The dinner took place on July 13, 1978. Frosch was not able to be present, and neither was Hinners: The senior NASA person present was Adrienne Timothy, who had replaced Rasool, who had left NASA. The dinner and subsequent slide shows went very well; in particular, Morrison did his usual brilliant job expounding the spectacular NASA planetary images. At dinner things were sufficiently informal that I felt able to mildly enquire about how it had happened that SETI had survived OMB. Cutter replied "I took astronomy at Harvard from Carl Sagan, and I did it for Carl."

The subsequent history of SETI on Capitol Hill, was the award of a Golden Fleece by Senator Proxmire (February 16, 1978), and the rejection by Congress of initiation of a SETI program. I was the person who was invited to the Hill to expound the program to Proxmire's aide, in preparation for the Fleece—rather fun, but sad for SETI. (After I left NASA, SETI was given to Life Sciences, and Proxmire's acquiescence was somehow obtained. A SETI program—JPL and Ames—is moving forward today.)

Our presence at the Cutter dinner is an example of the special role that Morrison and I played while at NASA, as active scientists with much greater technical knowledge of our fields than almost anyone else at Headquarters (but, I must add, negligible administrative ability, at least in my case, compared with almost anyone else at Headquarters). We were called on when technical substance and scientific depth were needed. I will end this section with another example of this, which is of special interest because President Carter was directly involved.

On November 15, 1977, I found on my desk a note for Bland Norris from David Williamson, Jr. I later learned that Williamson was "Code AX," Special Projects (Hinners was Code S, Science, and I was Code SAD, Science Astrophysics Deputy; the reader can use these Codes to track "who saw what," in certain of the appendices). Williamson was located on the

seventh floor, with the Administrator (Code A). (Williamson will play a prominent role in the discussion, below, of the UFO situation.) The note said "Bland . . . Jeff is expected to be calling Dick starting November 16 in the morning . . . Jeff has a 3" reflector . . . Frank Press hopes we can come up with a 7" Questar electric . . . the 7th floor offers its appreciation to the 5th floor for such an effective and controlled reaction." Bland let me know that my guess was right: "Jeff" was Jeff Carter, son of President Carter.

At Bland's request, I telephoned Frank Press, who let me know that the President and/or his son (it was not clear which) wanted to borrow a small telescope to take to Camp David over Thanksgiving.

To NASA Headquarters, "telescope" is a budget item that the astronomers want too many of. What it is physically, and where one might be obtained, was unknown. I exaggerate, but certainly, Headquarters contained only paper; no telescopes. The request had been routed from Frosch (an oceanographer) to Hinners (a geologist) to Henry (an astronomer). Someone found out that Marshall Spaceflight Center, in Huntsville, Alabama, had a 7" Questar telescope, and that furthermore, by great luck, a NASA plane was flying from Huntsville to Washington the next day (Press was emphatic that the President wanted no special flights or other waste of taxpayer dollars). I called Jeff, and later I had my wife, Dr. Rita Mahon, meet me at National Airport with my car. We loaded the large wooden crate in the trunk, and arrived at the White House about seven p.m. on Friday, November 18, 1977.

Rita and I spent about half an hour with President and Mrs. Carter, Amy Carter, and Jeff and Annette Carter, assembling the Questar and trying it out on the upper floor balcony of the south side of the White House. The night was mostly cloudy, but the moon was visible. President Carter kept the telescope for about a week, and then Bland Norris and I retrieved it from Jeff, who said that his father had made good use of it at Camp David.

## UFOs

The reader now has some understanding of the environment at NASA Headquarters at the time that Frosch's letter of July 21, 1977 (Appendix 1), was received. Action (see Appendix 1) was assigned to Code F, but I don't recall a Code F, and my August 1978 Headquarters telephone book does not include any Code F. On July 29, Herbert J. Rowe, Associate Administrator for External Affairs (Code L), sent a note, confirming a meeting to be held August 3, 1977, 3:30-4:00 p.m., "to discuss the position NASA should take in regards to Dr. Press' recommendation," to the following persons: Gen. Crow, Dr. Hinners, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Newman, a person representing Joe Allen, and Dr. Henry. Dr. Joseph P. Allen, who was Director of the Office of Legislative Affairs (Code C), is the well-known astronaut ("we deliver"). Duward L. Crow was Assistant to the Deputy Administrator, Alan M.

Lovelace. Robert A. Newman was the Director of the Public Affairs Division, located in Code L. I am not certain what Chapman's position was; possibly he was Deputy to Rowe. My memory of the meeting is of desultory conversation, including General Crow saying in a bemused manner that his daughter believed implicitly that as a former Air Force General, he knew all about UFOs and was keeping it secret from the public. I believe that the only result of the meeting was that action (jargon for responsibility) was handed to Dr. Hinners, to formulate a recommendation to the Administrator.

After the meeting, I spoke in the hall with Hinners, letting him know that for many years I had been Astrophysics consultant to the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO), a private UFO research group that was located in Tucson, Arizona. My motivation was partly to let Hinners know that I had some specific relevant expertise on the subject at hand, but also to "warn" him that I was not a completely disinterested neutral party on the controversial question of UFOs.

From that point on, the only meetings on the subject that I recall attending were one or two very small (or even one-on-one) meetings in his office with David Williamson Jr. Williamson impressed me as being the most intelligent person in the building. He discoursed on UFOs to me at some length, and in an extremely knowledgeable way, and, as we shall see, he formulated for Hinners' signature the recommendation that finally went to Frosch.

In the meantime, it had leaked out to the world that Henry might be designated the NASA project officer for UFOs (in the end, no one was). For example, on September 22, 1977, Alan C. Holt, of VISIT, Inc., wrote to me "We understand that your assignment as Project Officer is forthcoming and that the 2-3 month study will begin approximately October 1." I sent the letter up to Hinners, with that sentence highlighted. Hinners replied "you sure do draw 'em in, SAD. I suspect they got word of this from out there somewhere." I received a November 7, 1977 newsletter from Stanton T. Friedman which contained the item "NASA will be taking a look at the UFO question in response to a lot of pressure on the White House which in turn pressured the Science Advisor which then pushed NASA. The scientist in charge of the inquiry is Dr. Richard Henry, Department of Astrophysics at NASA Headquarters." On November 1, 1977, someone in Senator Hatfield's office telephoned NASA, and Herbert Rowe (Code L) wrote, on November 3, to Senator Hatfield, in response ". . . NASA at this time is conducting a study of the literature for approximately the last ten years to determine whether it might be worthwhile to conduct any further investigation of UFO's at this time. A project officer has been assigned to the task of reviewing the UFO literature and he is presently organizing this task . . ." Of course, by this time Frosch and Press had had an exchange of letters (Appendices 2 and 4), and Rowe surely believed that a project officer must by now have been designated. Blind copies of Rowe's letter went to two Code L files (chronological and subject) . . . and to "SA/Henry." A type-

written note was attached: "Who is the project officer? He should be informed that a number of definitive overview documents have been (sic) by investigators at the request of the Committee on the subject of UFO's and these studies would be of help to him in compiling this information." A blue mark appeared at the disjoint point in the second sentence, and in blue the first sentence was crossed out and "Info for Dr. Henry fr Code C." inserted.

In addition to a certain number of letters from "pro<sup>w</sup>-UFO types, I had received two communications from "debunkers<sup>w</sup>—Phil Klass sent me (October 1, 1977) a copy of his book, *UFOs Explained* (Klass, 1976) marked "To Richard Henry with the hope this may shed useful light on an old controversy—And help you and NASA avoid the fate of "Tar Baby" and the late Dr. Ed Condon!" And Robert Scheaffer wrote to me on letterhead of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, ". . . be prepared to be deluged by mail from every kook and crackpot in the country, and even worse, be prepared for letters from the 'scientific' UFO investigators, who will appear reasonable and sane enough, yet are true believers in every sense of the word . . ." I replied (October 5, 1977) "I have not yet been assigned . . . you are very kind to warn me about other people who may write to me with views that differ from your own."

Of course, at this time I was attempting to think through what NASA's response to Press should be. However, Hinnners had not asked me to do anything at all, much less prepare options or recommendations.

On October 20, 1977, I apparently saw for the first time Frosch's September 6 letter to Press (Appendix 2), and I immediately communicated my concern to Hinnners (Appendix 8). My concern was that Frosch had promised more than he could deliver. I took the opportunity to recommend that "the NASA Project Officer chosen be given the highest U.S. security clearance, and also be provided with a letter from President Carter establishing his need to know regarding unidentified aerial phenomena." I went on to say that "If this procedure in not followed, there will be a hole as big as a barn door in any NASA "specific recommendation" that is *negative* on UFO's."

On October 21, 1977, I received a telephone call from Phil Klass, mildly enquiring whether I was indeed the project officer, and whether I had had any previous association with UFOs. I answered him frankly, and subsequently I decided to put down formally on paper for Hinnners what I had previously explained to him verbally. My memo is reproduced as Appendix 9. The only part of the memo that needs clarification is item **3B**; I did not literally mean "other dimensions"; this phrase is a result of having read John Keel's book, *Operation Trojan Horse* (Keel, 1970). The book impressed me as nonsense, but left me with an openness to the possibility that our present world-view is *fundamentally wrong*; it is this possibility that I intended to convey succinctly.

About this time, I must have learned of Press' concurrence on naming a project officer (Appendix 4) and I was surely expecting to either be named

project officer, or at least asked for advice as to who should be named. It appeared to me that Frosch was now committed to naming a project officer.

I expressed my thoughts as to what I would recommend be done, if I were named, in a draft memo for Hinnners to send to Frosch, but it was never typed or submitted to Hinnners for consideration, because I wasn't asked. According to the draft, Hinnners would ask Henry to ask Dr. Stephen P. Maran (of NASA's Goddard Spaceflight Center, in Greenbelt, Maryland) to be the Project Officer. Maran would spend "two months full time" assembling information on "post-Condon" UFO reports, from APRO and other "pro"-UFO organizations, and obtain comment on these reports from Klass and Schaeffer. Maran would then draft a conclusion "as to whether or not further investigation of these incidents is warranted. He will not attempt to come to a specific conclusion on any one incident; that would be the goal of a full investigation. Rather, he will examine the whole pattern of incidents and ask, and suggest an answer to, the global question, is further work indicated. In the event that he feels that the answer is yes, he will sketch the nature of such an investigation, and indicate how it might come to some definite conclusion. His report will be reviewed by Dr. Henry, myself, and David Williamson, and presented to you on January 2, 1978."

At this point, I had not spoken with Maran, but the question was moot. The request from Hinnners never came.

We now reach what, to my best information, is the critical point in NASA's efforts to deal with the UFO/White House situation. On October 31, 1977, Dave Williamson generated and distributed a draft memorandum, to be from Hinnners to the Administrator. My copy arrived in an envelope marked "EYES ONLY SA/Dr. Henry." Despite the dramatics, the document, like all documents that I read at NASA, was not classified, even so much as "Confidential."

The draft memorandum is reproduced as Appendix 10, and as far as I recollect is identical to what I finally concurred in (verbally to Hinnners) and that was sent by Hinnners to Frosch. I will not summarize Appendix 10 here, as it needs to be read in its entirety at this point.

I thought the draft masterful. I also felt that while the draft recommended Option 2, anyone reading it would instantly grab for Option 1.

There was one thing that was wrong in the memo: the claim of lack of "tangible or physical evidence." There is in fact plenty of such evidence (for what it is worth). In the event, the Administrator's final decision, clearly based on this memo, dealt directly with that defect by stating to Press (Appendix 5) "we stand ready to respond to any bona fide physical evidence from credible sources." Frosch's letter to Press in fact combines parts of each of the two options, and was drafted by Williamson (see the last line of Appendix 5).

I had mixed feelings about the situation, before and after Frosch wrote his final letter to Press. A clear anomaly in the draft memo is the recommendation that the first phases of Option 2 be run out of Headquarters, and particularly at an extraordinarily high level (Hinnners, Williamson, Chap-

man). NASA did *nothing* substantive at Headquarters itself. There is simply not sufficient manpower for Headquarters to carry out its administrative/**budget/policy** activity *and* projects as well (although of course Williamson's title was Assistant Administrator for "Special Projects").

This fact was rapidly brought into focus by a letter (Appendix 11) from Stanford University astrophysicist Peter A. Sturrock to Frosch, immediately following public release of Frosch's final letter to Press. Sturrock wanted to know, in effect, where to send the tangible evidence. The problem that this presented to Headquarters was nicely summarized in a memorandum by O. B. Lloyd, Jr. (Chief, Public Services Branch, Code L; Appendix 12). I received this memorandum with a copy of a "buck slip" from Bob Newman to Ken Chapman reading "Bill raises some good points here. Comments?" Chapman replied on the same form, "the original science problem was worked by Naugle/Hinners—I suggest we ask them for a position on handling any evidence. There are now two letters in suggesting or offering material evidence. Send a note to Naugle/Hinners asking how they plan to proceed." The slip is then marked "S-1 1. Hinners," and "P-1 2. Naugle," and finally scrawled on it is "Action to SC-Henry."

This finally gave me a chance to lay out my views to Hinners in some detail, and I did so in a memorandum on January 17, 1978 (Appendix 13). I thought that (a) NASA should be active, not passive, and (b) the substantive activity should take place at a NASA Center, as with any other NASA activity. I had by now spoken briefly, on one occasion, with my friend Steve Maran at Goddard, and he had not declined the role I envisaged for a Project Scientist. As my memo makes clear, I thought he would be ideal for the job.

And this is the end of the story. There was no response from Hinners to my memo. Sturrock, I understand, pursued an attempt to have NASA analyse a sample of material believed by some to be from a UFO. My file on UFOs, marked by me (for better or for worse), "The Secret NASA UFO file," contains a letter (Appendix 14) indicating that I did a little work supporting Hinners' and Williamson's handling of the follow-up, but I certainly did not do much. The final version of Information Sheet 78-1 (Appendix 15) represents to the world NASA's official position on UFOs. I had no hand in generating it. The draft of it that I have, indicates that the information on UFO groups was provided to Code L by Williamson. There is mention in 78-1 of Frosch's offer to respond to *bona fide* physical evidence, but no suggestion as to how to go about this.

I left NASA in the fall of 1978 to resume my academic position at The Johns Hopkins University.

### Conclusion

Why did NASA turn down the President of the United States on UFOs? There is only fragmentary evidence, and so no definite conclusion is possible. We can, however, look at various possibilities.

*a) Inhibition by Aliens*

A reason that I have maintained an interest in UFOs since graduate school is that they are a perfectly possible "unscientific" element in the world. By "unscientific," I mean the following. Einstein's famous dictum, "Raffiniert ist der Herrgott, aber Boschaft ist Er Nicht,"\*\* clearly does not apply to aliens, who might be very "Boschaft" ("malicious, spiteful, mischievous, malignant, wicked") indeed. With perhaps a billion years of biotechnology behind them, they could, if so inclined, insert agents at will into our society. You might not even be aware that you are an alien agent, if you are.

No conclusion on this possibility seems possible.

*b) Inhibition by the US Government*

Does the US government know all about UFOs and did a carefully placed person within NASA act to deflect/discourage any NASA investigation of UFOs?

There is some evidence, although it may well be fraudulent, of a US government "cover up" on UFOs (Moseley, 1987).

The person who "shot John" on UFOs, at NASA, surely was Dave Williamson (although he clearly had aid from others, including the author). His role in doing so was not at all hidden. On Saturday, November 26, 1977, while President Carter was using the Questar at Camp David, I was in a swimming pool in Florida. I happened to glance at a newspaper vending machine, and an eerie feeling of unreality swept over me. Staring at me was Dave Williamson, in a front-page photograph.

The notion that Williamson, or someone else at NASA, knowing that UFOs do include clear evidence for alien intelligence, deflected the inquiry to protect this government-held secret, can, I think, probably be rejected, simply because if it were true, why would the President or his science advisor have made the request in the first place? Of course, one could still imagine a "John Poindexter"-type isolation of the President, but this seems unlikely.

*c) Belief by NASA That UFOs Are Nonsense*

All I can say regarding this possibility is that I myself do not think that UFOs are nonsense, and no one at NASA Headquarters ever expressed such views in my presence. The general attitude seemed to me to be what I might call "repressed open mindedness."

*d) Fear of Ridicule*

I felt this myself, and expressed it to Hinnens (Appendix 9).

NASA Headquarters scientists and administrators had no fear of the scientific community. As no man is a hero to his valet, so no Nobel Prize

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\* "The Lord God is subtle, but He is not malicious."

winner is a hero to his grant administrator. But the negative reputation of UFO studies clearly had its effect on NASA.

*e) More Important Things To Do*

I have a note, dated November 29, 1977, from "Noel" [Hinners] to "Dave" [Williamson] reading "A sampler! It's obvious that going route of Option 1 will buy us neg. kudos but let's just be prepared. An Option 1 decision based on *no* look is fraught with the difficulties we've been discussing."

The Option 1 that is mentioned is presumably that in the Williamson draft memorandum (Appendix 10).

This suggests that Hinners favored Option 1. Just as in the case of Hinners' attitude on SETI, I speculate that his fundamental motivation was a desire not to cloud his extremely effective NASA space science program with activity that might detract in some way. I felt the same way. Perhaps in this affair, having a positive attitude to UFO study, I should have taken a more aggressive stance than I did, but I was worried about having to pay for it: If you are the one who wants it, generally you are the one who pays for it, and I considered it wrong to spend astrophysics funds on UFO study, despite feeling that UFO study was a worthy use of public funds. Also, I did not feel that a Goddard project was very likely to produce a more substantial result than did Condon's Colorado project. The only real defect in the Colorado project was in the Director's inaccurate summary, not the substance of the investigation itself. If the UFO phenomenon includes an element that is due to the presence of an alien intelligence in our vicinity, it was doubtful to me that that fact could ever be established by a "Blue Book" or "Colorado" or my proposed "Goddard" and its follow-up, that is, by incremental investigation and accumulation of cases of varying degrees of credibility. Carl Sagan has said that extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof, and he is right. Extraordinary proof of the "reality" of UFOs cannot easily come from us; it must surely come from the UFOs, if it will.

### Postscript

The manuscript of this paper was sent to President Carter, Frank Press, David Williamson, and Noel Hinners for comment. Williamson, responding for himself and Hinners, made clear that the NASA program of analysis of hard evidence was considerably more extensive than I had realized: "We entertained a great number of inquiries and ran a number of analyses . . . we developed a simple procedure for anyone's getting a suspect sample to NASA (with a quitclaim so we could cut, drill holes, and so on) . . . I am glad we had the courage to do the right thing for the right reason." Press responded but had no comment to make. Carter returned my letter and marked it "I don't have any comment, except below"; and below, beside my sentence "The most important point that you could clarify, if you will, is

whether you yourself were behind Frank Press' letter of July 21, 1977, to NASA," is the word "no."

**Author's Note.** Photo reproduction (rather than typesetting) has been used for the Appendices, in order to leave clear and apparent all of the tracking notes and approvals that are on the original documents. Some price is paid, of course, in terms of legibility.

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## Appendix 1

July 21, 1977, Letter From Dr. Frank Press to Dr. Robert Frosch

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20500

July 21, 1977

Dear Bob:

We have discovered that the White House is becoming the focal point for an increasing number of inquiries concerning UFO's. As you know, there appears to be a national revival of interest in the matter with a younger generation becoming involved. Those of us in the Executive Office are ill-equipped to handle these kinds of inquiries.

It seems to me that the focal point for the UFO question ought to be in NASA. I recommend two things: since it has been nearly a decade since the Condon report, I believe that a small panel of inquiry could be formed to see if there are any new significant findings. Since this is a public relations problem as much as anything else, people who are known to be interested in the problem and also highly known, such as Carl Sagan, ought to be involved. This is a panel of inquiry that could be formed by NASA.

The second thing I would like to suggest is that NASA become the focal point for general correspondence and that those inquiries which come to the White House be sent to the designated desk at NASA.

Yours sincerely,

*Frank*Frank Press  
Director

Robert Frosch  
Administrator  
National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration  
Washington, D.C. 20546

Action Copy to F  
Info Copy to A, ADA,  
AD, AC,  
L

Rec'd in NASA 7-25-77Date 8-8-77- - - Reply for signature of A

R.C. Henry

## Appendix 2

September 6, 1977, Letter From Dr. Robert Frosch to Dr. Frank Press

by: SA/Dr. Henry

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~~3.50~~

SEP 6 1977

Honorable Frank Press  
 Director  
 Office of Science and Technology Policy  
 Executive Office of the President  
 Washington, DC 20500

Dear Frank:

In your letter of July 21 you expressed the view that NASA should be the focal point for UFO matters, and specifically recommended that a panel of inquiry be formed by NASA to see if there are any significant new findings since the Condon report and that NASA become **the focal** point for general correspondence and inquiries.

While we are inclined to agree with your recommendation, there are a number of questions which need to be resolved before any formal program is undertaken. You may know that the Air Force served **as** the focal point for UFO matters during the 1960's and devoted considerable resources to the program. **It**, however, concluded, in the absence of significant findings, that the program warranted no more than routine **form** letter answers to inquiries and has been handling the program in that manner since about 1970. **It** now handles a small number of inquiries, perhaps 10 to 12 monthly. NASA, likewise, handles routine inquiries by **form** letter response, 10 to 12 formal inquiries and a somewhat larger number of public inquiries monthly. NASA uses the information sheet attached in its responses. **The** Air Force uses similar data.

From the point of view of the Administration **as** a whole, this is economical. However, **it** fails to provide a recognized focal point for technical appraisal of sightings and understandably results in some frustration to individuals making what they consider to be serious inquiries.

A panel of inquiry such as you suggest might possibly discover new significant findings. **It** would certainly generate current

2

interest and could lead to the designation of NASA as the focal point for UFO matters. It would require some additional resources for the inquiry and for follow-on activity. Before committing to this, I feel that we should **assure** ourselves that an **inquiry** is justified. I believe we could do this by naming a NASA project officer to review reports of the **last** ten years and to provide a specific recommendation relative to any further inquiry by the end of **this** year. If you concur, I will initiate **this** action.

Very truly yours,

Original Signed By  
Robert A. Frosch

Robert A. Frosch  
**Administrator**

Enclosure

cc: AA  
AC  
ADA  
S  
F  
L  
W  
C  
AE

F/RA Newman:elt:8/18/77 A-34611  
Rewritten:ADA/L:Rowe/Crow:8/25/77  
Rewritten:ADA/Crow:aom:9/1/77

## Appendix 3

## NASA Information Sheet 76-6, "Unidentified Flying Objects"



## INFORMATION SHEET

FGM 76-6

Prepared by

FGM/Office of Public Affairs  
NASA Headquarters  
Washington, D.C. 20546UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

NASA is not involved in research concerning unidentified flying objects. Reports of unidentified objects entering U.S. air space are of interest to the U.S. military as a regular part of defense surveillance, but no government agency is conducting an ongoing investigation of UFOs at this time.

An extensive study known as Project Blue Book was undertaken in the 1960's by the U.S. Air Force through a contract with the University of Colorado. Based on the findings of this study as reviewed by the National Academy of Sciences, the Air Force terminated the project December 17, 1969.

The University of Colorado report, entitled Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects, was published in paperback by Bantam Books. A three-volume photoduplication (AD 680:975-6-7) may be purchased for \$18 from the National Technical Information Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, Springfield, Virginia 22151. The complete reports were transferred from Air Force storage in July 1976 to The National Archives, 8th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20408. Those wishing to view the report must obtain a researcher's permit from the National Archives and Records Service.

The University of Colorado study reached the following conclusions: (1) there was no evidence that the subject of UFOs had been "shrouded in official **security**"; (2) UFOs did not constitute any hazard to national security; (3) two decades of UFO study had made no significant contribution to scientific knowledge; and (4) further extensive study of the general topic could not be expected to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of science.

2

The panel of the National Academy of Sciences agreed with these conclusions and further commented, "On the basis of present knowledge the least likely explanation of UFOs is the hypothesis of extraterrestrial visitations by intelligent beings."

Although the U.S. government no longer dedicates funds and personnel to the study of UFOs, investigations are continuing under private auspices. The Center for UFO Studies, P.O. Box 11, Northfield, Illinois 60093 (telephone 312/491-1870) is a source for publications and information on UFO phenomena. The National Investigating Committee on Aerial Phenomena, Suite 23, 3535 University Boulevard, Kensington, Maryland 20795 (telephone 301/949-1267) also replies to requests for general information. Both organizations investigate reported sightings of unidentified flying objects.

July 1976

NASA-HQ

R. C. Henry

Appendix 4

September 14, 1977, Letter From Dr. Frank Press to Dr. Robert Frosch

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3

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY  
WASHINGTON DC 20500

September 14, 1977

Dear Bob:

I have your letter of September 6 responding to my letter of July 21 recommending that NASA become a focal point for Federal activity in UFO matters.

I am pleased that you agree that NASA can handle the public inquiries on UFOs. The fact that my Office and the White House can direct such inquiries to NASA will relieve my small staff of a responsibility we are not equipped to handle. Therefore, I have asked my assistant, Stan Schneider, who has discussed this matter with your Executive Officer, Ed Andrews, to forward all our UFO inquiries to NASA.

Regarding the recommendation for NASA to become a focal point for the scientific and technical appraisal of the UFO phenomenon, I can understand your reluctance to commit the agency to a formal program before evaluating the current status and recent history of UFO activity and determining what might be involved in conducting a serious study on this matter. Therefore, I concur with your idea of assigning a project officer at NASA to review the situation before deciding whether to undertake a more formal inquiry.

By copy of this letter, I am informing Jim Purks of the White House Media Liaison Office of our exchange of ideas on this subject so that they are in the communications loop on this situation. I will suggest that he forward all public inquiries on UFOs to the White House to NASA (Code 4) for response.

I would appreciate it if NASA could keep my office, through Stan Schneider, informed of any progress the agency makes toward a decision on a possible UFO study.

Yours sincerely,

*Frank Press*  
Frank Press  
Director

Honorable Robert A. Frosch  
Administrator  
National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration  
Washington, D.C. 20546

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info Copy to  
A-100  
A-101  
L.S.W.  
C. A. E. / *Ed Andrews*  
A-9611  
Held in NASA 9-19-77  
None  
Signature of  
9-20-77

## Appendix 5

December 21, 1977, Letter From Dr. Robert Frosch to Dr. Frank Press



December 21, 1977

Honorable Frank Press  
Director  
Office of Science and Technology  
Policy  
Executive Office of the President  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Frank:

In response to your letter of September 14, 1977, regarding NASA's possible role in UFO matters, we are fully prepared at this time to continue responding to public inquiries along the same lines as we have in the past. If some new element of hard evidence is brought to our attention, in the future, it would be entirely appropriate for a NASA laboratory to analyze and report upon an otherwise unexplained organic or inorganic sample; we stand ready to respond to any bona fide physical evidence from credible sources. We intend to leave the door clearly open for such a possibility.

We have given considerable thought to the question of what else the United States might and should do in the area of UFO research. There is an absence of tangible or physical evidence available for thorough laboratory analysis. And because of the absence of such evidence, we have not been able to devise a sound scientific procedure for investigating these phenomena. To proceed on a research task without a disciplinary framework and an exploratory technique in mind would be wasteful and probably unproductive. I do not feel that we could mount a research effort without a better starting point than we have been able to identify thus far. I would therefore propose that NASA take no steps to establish a research activity in this area or to convene a symposium on this subject.

I wish in no way to indicate that NASA has come to any conclusion about these phenomena as such: **institutionally**, we retain an open mind, a **keen** sense of scientific **curiosity**, and a willingness to **analyze** technical problems within our **competence**.

Very truly yours,

Robert A. Frosch  
Administrator

bcc: A, AD, S-1, L-1, AX, NHS-23  
LF/Waggoner, NHS/Lichty

AX-1/D.Williamson, Jr.:djs:12-20-77

## Appendix 6

August 17, 1977, Letter From Dr. Richard Henry to Major Ret. Colman  
S. Von Keviczky

AUG 17 1977

SA(RCH:jb)

Major Ret. Colman S. VonKevicsky, MMSE  
Director of ICUFON  
35-40 75 Street, Suite 4G  
Jackson Heights, NY 11372

Dear Major VonKeviczky:

Dr. Ichtiaque Rasool has asked me to reply to your  
letter of August 9, 1977.

NASA's Office of Space Science is indeed considering,  
at the present time, whether to go ahead with a radio  
search for intelligent extraterrestrial signals.

If there were clear evidence that extraterrestrials were  
presently in the vicinity of the earth, we would certainly  
cast our investigation in that direction instead. However,  
such a clear evidence does not exist. Instead, what exists  
is a baffling collection of intriguing anecdotal evidence  
for mysterious phenomena, usually referred to as "UFO's."  
I have personally followed the UFO phenomenon for many  
years, as Astrophysics consultant to a major UFO investigation  
group. I have been disappointed, as the years have gone by,  
that nothing substantial has emerged from the intensive  
research efforts of several very competent independent  
research group. This does not mean that the phenomenon  
is not real, but it does mean that extracting verifiable  
information from it is a formidable problem.

The Office of Space Science is charged with exploring the space  
environment of the earth, and studying the universe. We place first  
priority on straightforward scientific investigations of the cosmos.  
Even a radio search for intelligent signals is considered very  
speculative, and I am sure the we will have our work cut out for us  
in selling the concept.

I fully recognize that the possibility exists that we are  
taking the wrong approach. It is a matter of management  
judgement. I am personally convinced that the radio  
search is a very worthwhile undertaking.

Yours sincerely,

(original very faint; re-typed May 1988)

Richard C. Henry

R. C. Henry

## Appendix 7

August 9, 1977, Letter From Major Ret. Colman S. Von Keviczky to  
Dr. Ichtiague Rasool

## • ICUFON •

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OFFICE OF THE  
DIRECTOR OF PROJECT

HEADQUARTERS  
35-40 75TH STREET, SUITE 4G  
JACKSON HEIGHTS N. Y. 11372  
TEL. (212) 672-7948 U. S. A.

August 9, 1977

Dr. Ichtiague Rasool, Chief Scientist  
NASA Office of Space Science  
Washington D.C., 20546

Dear Dr. Rasool:

It is my obligation to inform you about our memorandum addressed to the United Nations Secretary General and the member **nations' Permanent Representatives** regarding the taped messages which will be launched by the Voyager I and II sounds to contact possible extraterrestrial intelligence within the solar system and beyond.

I am sorry to express our firm belief resulted of our 25 years of military, scientific and technological research and their evidences, that the time urge the NASAs scientific community to change their views upon the project **SETI** and seek rather communication with the exploring galactic forces and their operation authorities, than wasting time and \$ billions to search ETI in the depth of the Universe.

Existence of Galactic Powers and their earthbound operation has been officially verified from the year of 1947 by the highest responsible authorities of the US national defense and security: as the Presidents and their Chiefs of Staff, Disposals for armed and retorting confrontation by the strategic defense global emergency are still in effect up to date, which should constitute also a logical explanation of the radio astronomy contact's **fiascos**, - why are we ignored by the ETI.

In deliberation, that the UFO problem is above all an international security problem, your orthodox scientists should pay serious attention that their wilfull negligence and further habitual **polem** on the UFOs, in case of a fatal impact - which is a step from open **hostilities** - could easily lead not to a "Scientific Watergate" but to a "Nuremberg Trial". Namely the crime against the peace and humanity is qualified as a "**supreme war crime**" in the Charter of the United Nations, adopted by the General Assembly on February 14, 1946.

Your kind attention to the enclosures would be gratefully appreciated.

Yours respectfully,

*Colman S. Von Keviczky*  
Major Ret. Colman S. VonKeviczky, MMSE  
Director of ICUFON

Enclosures.

## Appendix 8

October 20, 1977, Memorandum, Dr. Richard Henry to Dr. Noel Hinners

**NASA**National Aeronautics and  
Space AdministrationWashington, D.C.  
20546

OCT 20 1977

Reply to Attn of SA (RCH:abw)

## MEMORANDUM

TO: S/Associate Administrator for Space Science

FROM: SAD/Deputy Director of Astrophysics Programs

SUBJECT: UFO's

I have now seen A's letter of September 6, 1977, to Frank Press, on the subject of UFO's, and I am a bit concerned on a few points. Frosch has agreed to ". . . name a NASA Project Officer to review reports of the last ten years and to provide a specific recommendation relative to any further inquiry by the end of this year." My concern is that the volume of reports for the last ten years is far beyond what even a moderately, well-staffed project at a NASA center could possibly reevaluate between now and the end of the year. For NASA to make a "specific recommendation" on the basis of what could actually be accomplished in that period of time would open NASA to a valid charge of either whitewash or idiocy (depending on which way the recommendation went).

I have a second concern. There is belief among some Americans that the government knows all about UFO's, but that it is all highly classified. I recommend that the NASA Project Officer chosen be given the highest U.S. security clearance, and also be provided with a letter from President Carter establishing his "need to know" regarding unidentified aerial phenomena. If this procedure is not followed, there will be a hole as big as a barn door in any NASA "specific recommendation" that is negative on UFO's.



Richard C. Henry

R.C. Henry

## Appendix 9

October 21, 1977, Memorandum From Dr. Richard C. Henry to  
Dr. Noel Hinners

# NASA

National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration

Washington, D C  
20546

October 21, 1977

Reply to Attn of **SAD(RCH:ap)**

## MEMORANDUM

TO: **S/Associate Administrator for Space Science**

FROM: **SAD/Deputy Director, Astrophysics Programs**

SUBJECT: **My Previous Experience in the Study of UFO's**

Some weeks ago I was invited to attend, with you, a meeting in Herb Rowe's office to discuss a letter that Dr. Frosch had received from Dr. Frank Press on UFO's. I did not solicit that invitation. Immediately after the meeting, I informed you verbally that I had an interest of long standing in UFO's, and that I was consultant in astrophysics to a leading "amateur" UFO organization. I explained these facts also to my immediate supervisor, Bland Norris.

Yesterday I received a call from Phil Klass of Aviation Week. He asked if I were in charge of UFO's for NASA, and I said that I had not been selected for the task, but that I might well be. He asked if I had any previous association with UFO's, and I detailed it. Klass is the author of "UFO's Explained".

I would like to make explicitly clear to you what my involvement with UFO's has been, and what my views on the subject are:

1. I have been a member of the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO) for more than ten years, and their consultant on astrophysics for perhaps eight years. APRO is run by Coral and Jim Lorenze, in Tucson, Arizona. Membership in APRO does not involve acceptance of any particular views on the nature of UFO's, but Coral and Jim most emphatically believe that visitors from other worlds are involved!

- 2 -

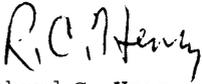
As astrophysics consultant, I have performed one task for APRO. I analyzed a supposed "star map" that had been received by radio in some mysterious way. I showed that the "map" was not a map of the region of sky claimed. This was published in the APRO bulletin.

On another occasion, I became suspicious of a sighting reported in the APRO bulletin and showed that the sighting was almost certainly Venus. I wrote to Coral and she published my finding.

2. For the past several years, I have been a member of Alan Hynek's "invisible college" - qualified scientists who feel that the UFO phenomenon deserves attention. Hynek himself is the former Air Force consultant on UFO's. He was a great scoffer, but in recent years he has come to take UFO's very seriously. I have performed no tasks for Alan.
3. My views on UFO's are:
  - A. The UFO-report phenomenon exists, is widespread, and is of great interest to a large segment of the American people.
  - B. I see no à priori reason why some of the UFO reports could not be due to sightings of visitors from other worlds or other dimensions.
  - C. I see no overwhelming indication that *any* UFO report is due to "extraterrestrials".
  - D. I confess to occasionally feeling, about UFO's, like the small boy who on Christmas morning found only a pile of horse manure under the tree. Undeterred, he cheerfully dug away, reasoning that there had to be a pony somewhere!
  - E. I feel that the Condon investigation did not adequately deal with the UFO phenomenon, and that further government investigation is warranted.
4. In previous "impartial" investigations it has been deemed essential to have, as a leader, a person who has had no significant previous interest or experience in UFO's. The result, in my view, has been

very unsatisfactory: total immersion in UFO's rapidly produces in such people a polarization of opinion one way or the other that compromises the integrity of the investigation. Despite this, the alternative is perhaps even more unsatisfactory.

5. My view 3E above indicates that I already have an opinion on the particular subject that NASA has been asked to investigate.
6. UFO's are (as Phil Klass indicates, in a note to me in the copy of his **book**, which he kindly sent me) a "tar baby". A scientist who touches the tar baby once, as I have, runs the risk of getting deeper and deeper in goo. I **don't** have a strong stomach for it, and would prefer to avoid it. But, I also want to ~~make sure that NASA itself does~~ not get badly tarred.



Richard C. Henry

## Appendix 10

## October 31, 1977, Draft Memorandum (by D. Williamson) From Dr. Noel Hinners to Dr. Robert Frosch

D R A E ' T  
X: DWilliamson, Jr.  
10-31-77

## MEMORANDUM

TO: A/Administrator  
FROM: S/Associate Administrator for Space Science  
SUBJECT: UFO Study Considerations

Following the recent exchange of correspondence with Frank Press, I have been giving the UFO matter some thought, especially the question of what NASA could reasonably do in both the short and long term.

The environment since the 1969 Condon report seems to have changed:

- o There is a widespread interest in UFO's (and in related paranormal phenomena) that cannot be dismissed lightly as involving only a fringe of the population; probably 50% of the United States believes that "something" in the way of persistent phenomena exists or has existed.
- o The UN is currently considering a resolution to establish a specialized agency for UFO matters.
- o In France, the CNES has been formally charged with setting up a UFO study activity under Claude Poher.
- o There are many apparently viable private organizations in the United States with responsible memberships that are following the UFO phenomena from several different view points.
- o There seems to have been an increase in reports of the "near encounter" type (Pascagoula, Miss., 1973; Prospect, Ky., 1977) over the last few years.
- o There is a general feeling among the UFO organizations at least that the United States Government "knows" far more than it has released, and may even have pieces of UFO hardware in hand.

Open-mindedness about UFO and paranormal phenomena seems to be becoming more "respectable" in the general public. Books and articles flourish. The IEEE is often a forum for matters that would have been rejected out of hand ten years ago. Classified and unclassified research supported by Federal agencies has brushed the UFO community (proponents of "remote viewing" often cross-couple with UFO proponents). At the same time, there are vocal "debunking" groups active on the other side of the issue; the matter seems rather polarized in modern society.

There are two major problems involved in considering any review of the UFO phenomenon by NASA: first, an apparent lack of any tangible or physical evidence available for laboratory analysis; second, the absence of any sound scientific protocol for investigating the phenomenon first-hand. There is a plethora of secondary source material -- human observation and reports thereon -- but hearsay is difficult to deal with scientifically. There are, of course, other problems as well: the probability of hoaxes, the tendency for any investigator to pre-judge, the delicate interface of the Government with any private individual reporting an incident, and the danger of projecting an inaccurate NASA or Administration image. All in all, undertaking a formal study at this time appears fraught with perils.

It appears that NASA has two immediate choices, each with its follow-on implications:

1. We could, on the basis of the situation outlined above and without taking further action, recommend to OSTP that we see no responsible way at this time for the Federal government, and especially NASA, to investigate the UFO phenomenon.
  - a. This approach might encourage the vocal pro-UFO groups to continue their charges of cover-up and bureaucratic blindness.
  - b. It might avoid fomenting controversy and division within the science community NASA deals with.

- c. It would require no change in our current PIO responses to the public.
  - d. It would divert no resources from those **higher** priority applications, science, and technology activities which are our legislated charges.
  - e. It would also be begging the question.
2. We could make a formal request, from my office or Ken Chapman's, to the largest and best-known of the UFO organizations (APRO, NICAP, MUFON, CUFOs, etc.) requesting them to submit their "**best**" cases to aid us in determining the Government's possible role. We could then compile this material into a usable format, do some first-order checks (probably involving some interviews and data-gathering), and, before drawing our **own** conclusions, ask for a "pees review"--possibly by the Smithsonian Institution. NASA would then make its own assessment as to whether further research were warranted or not, and if so, in what direction it should proceed. As a minimum, having gone this far and this publicly, NASA should stand ready to investigate new hard evidence that might come in -- this could logically be an added assignment for ARC and MSFC, depending on the physical or biological character of the evidence.
- a. This approach commits NASA and the Administration publicly to at least some review of the phenomenon; an eventual negative decision will not satisfy the enthusiasts and a positive one will enrage the non-enthusiasts.
  - b. It will encourage a great deal of correspondence on both sides of the question; it may lead to a rash of sightings, hoaxes, and/or public excitement.
  - c. It will place severe demands on the few NASA people involved in the first phase: there will be problems of workload, peer pressure, and **pre-judgment**.

- d. If any follow-through becomes necessary, the resources needed could be quite large -- travel, tests, interviews, and reports.

I recommend that: we proceed with the first phases of Option 2, under a Headquarters team of myself, Chapman, and Williamson; that we take time to tap the private organizations properly and not establish an arbitrary deadline; and that we consider further actions early next year.

Noel W. Hinnens

Appendix 11

December 30, 1977, Letter From Dr. Peter Sturrock to Dr. Noel Hinners

INSTITUTE FOR PLASMA RESEARCH  
 STANFORD UNIVERSITY  
 VIA CRESPI, STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305



December 30, 1977

Dr. Robert A. Frosch  
 Administrator  
 National Aeronautics and Space  
 Administration  
 Washington, D.C. 20546

Dear Dr. Frosch:

Thank you for your kind letter dated December 22. I have subsequently learned from news articles that you have decided that NASA should not undertake an investigation of the UFO problem. I understand from your letter that a key reason for this decision is the difficulty of conducting a scientific investigation "where the criteria of reproducible or recurrent observations are not available."

The news reports have quoted you as stating that "if some new element of hard evidence is brought to our attention in the future, it would be entirely appropriate for a NASA laboratory to analyze and report upon an otherwise unexplained organic or inorganic sample." As I mentioned in my letter dated December 2, my colleagues and I in the Study Group on Anomalous Phenomena have obtained access to some physical evidence such as films, material samples, etc. The cooperation of NASA laboratories would be most helpful in obtaining meaningful assessments of these items of evidence.

For this reason, I would greatly appreciate your advising me whether, in line with your quoted statement, I may seek photographic, chemical and metallurgical analyses of such samples from NASA laboratories.

Sincerely yours,

P.A. Sturrock  
 Professor of Space Science  
 and Astrophysics

PAS/gc

1 Copy to LF  
 1 Copy to A, ADB,  
 AY, L  
 A1460  
 Filed in NASA 28-01-03  
 28-01-17  
 A

R. C. Henry

Appendix 12

January 6, 1978, Memorandum From O. B. Lloyd, Jr., to LF-6/Director of Public Affairs



National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Washington, D C 20546

Reply to Attn of LFF-3

*Ken Chapman -  
Bill raised some  
good points here.  
Comments?  
Bob Neumann  
1/9*

January 6, 1978

MEMORANDUM

TO: LF-6/Director of Public Affairs  
FROM: LFF-3/Chief, Public Services Branch  
SUBJECT: Procedure for Receiving Alleged UFO-related "Physical Evidence" for Analysis by NASA

The attached letter from Professor P. A. Sturrock seeking NASA analysis of certain physical evidence concerning anomalous phenomena is probably a prelude to similar communications. Should it be the only such letter, NASA still needs a procedure for receiving, documenting, processing and safeguarding the materials.

It would seem appropriate that before any such material would be received by NASA the sender be required to advise NASA of certain specifics, such as:

- o the nature of the evidence
- o is this all of the evidence or is this a portion of a larger amount known to exist?
- o what is the size, weight of the materials?
- o liability - will the government be expected to return the materials in the precise condition they are received?
- o what about loss through testing, evaporation or other processes?
- o if accepted by the government, would NASA be expected to provide security (such as is now required for lunar samples)?

In the interest of security and documentation it would appear that one point should be designated to receive all evidence. Further, a person with technical expertise should be responsible for:

## 2.

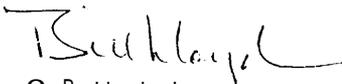
- o application of policies and procedures, as established by NASA headquarters, in processing evidence at NASA centers
- o selection of the appropriate testing facility or facilities
- o transportation of the evidence from the receiving point to the appropriate NASA facility
- o compiling and forwarding of findings resulting from the analysis
- o return to the sender, or such other disposition as may be determined, of the evidence.

Since the letter to Dr. Press from the Administrator invites submission of bona fide physical UFO evidence, NASA would appear obligated to proceed toward ultimate acceptance of the materials offered by Dr. Sturrock. I would propose he be sent an interim letter outlining the preparatory actions noted above, assure him of the agency's interest in his offer and request such detailed information as noted above.

Meantime, I would suggest bringing together to agree on a procedure representation embracing all aspects of the activity, including scientific, legal, security and Public Affairs. In expectation that there may be submissions from foreign as well as domestic sources, representation should probably be included from International Affairs.

Finally, NASA liaison with other branches of the government should be kept apprised in event there is a development of importance.

If you concur in this general approach, I will prepare an interim response to Professor Sturrock.



O. B. Lloyd, Jr.

Att.

R. C. Henry

## Appendix 13

January 17, 1978, Memorandum From Dr. Richard Henry to  
Dr. Noel Hinners



JAN 17 1978

SC(RCH:jb)

## MEMORANDUM

TO: S-1/Associate Administrator for Space Science  
FROM: SC-7/Deputy Director of Astrophysics Division  
SUBJECT: UFO Matters

I write this memo in response to your request, of 17 January 1978, that I provide you with a suggested response to Bob Newman's request for suggestions on how to deal with the issues raised by Peter Sturrock's letter on UFO "hard evidence."

Let me move back a few steps and review the whole NASA UFO situation.

Some time ago I gave you by telephone my concurrence on the draft memo that Dave Williamson provided you to use in advising the Administrator concerning a response to Frank Preuss' request. I have just re-read that draft, and I still think that it is a fine memo. There is only one point in it that I would now (too late!) question, and that is the statement that there is an "absence of any sound scientific protocol for investigating the (UFO) phenomenon first hand." The National Academy of Sciences endorsed the Condon study of UFO's, and specifically endorsed their procedures (protocol). It hardly does for us to say that no sound protocol is possible! I do agree with Dave that a protocol is extraordinarily difficult. The point is, that to be meaningful the protocol must cover the possibility that the UFO phenomenon is due in part to intelligences far beyond our own. I very much doubt that an intellectually inferior species can study an intellectually far superior species if the superior species chooses not to be studied. They could run rings around us:

Be that as it may, the memo offered to Dr. Frosch two suggested options: 1) Try to duck out of it completely, or 2) Do a study. Your recommendation to Dr. Frosch was to follow option two some ways, and review matters early in 1978.

2

Dr. Frosch's letter of 21 December 1977 to Frank Press indicates that he chose, in my judgement, the worst features of each of the two options. We turned-down Frank Press before the world; we dismissed UFO's without a study (feature "e" of Option 1); yet!...We started (it seems) a NASA UFO "Hard Evidence" Analysis Program ("UFOHEAP"). Furthermore, UFOHEAP is not a program intellectually directed and given coherence by NASA officials, scientists, and technologists, but rather is a "reaction" program, controlled in key respects by whoever in the world chooses to submit what they consider "hard evidence" to NASA.

What to do?

I suggest that there are three options that are sustainable:

Option 1. Consistent Follow-through. Bill Lloyd's 6 January 1973 memo to Bob Newman covers this option very well--including many things I would not have thought of. The activity should be run out of one Center--a focal point--although the actual analysis would be done at various centers, depending on the type of analysis needed. At the chosen Center there should be one key person in charge of the operation, and he/she must be scientifically/technically sound and politically astute.

In favor of this options

Consistency

Against this option:

It places NASA in an intolerable position. We have no UFO program and no position on UFO's as such, yet we are the Pope of UFO Evidence. Ravening hordes of bunkers and debunkers will attack every NASA "pronouncement from the chair."

Option 2. Dodge. Interpret "hard evidence" so strictly that no activity results. This would return us, at some additional cost in credibility, to the joys of Dave's original Option 1.

In favor of this option:

All the virtues of the original Option 1.

Against this option:

In addition to the defects of the original Option 1, we violate the apparent spirit of Dr. Frosch's 21 December 1977 letter to Frank Press,

3

Option 3. Bull-by-the-Horns.

Pretend NASA is simply following through on the 21 December letter, but actually mount a modest active (rather than passive) activity. Have NASA run UFO's, not UFO's run NASA. This would be, in effect, deciding to follow the Option 2 that you originally offered to Bob.

In favor of this option:

It faces up to a real national concern, and furthermore it does so in a much more low-key way than if NASA had directly proceeded with the original Option 2.

Against this option:

All the defects of the original Option 2. Also, there is the danger of it appearing that NASA is conducting a "secret" UFO study.

Recommendation

I recommend Option 3. My feeling is that NASA is now stuck to the tar-baby, so let0 deal with it properly.

If Option 3 is chosen, there are certain key decisions to be made. My recommendations on these follow. The activity should be run by the Office of Space Science. Additional resources should be provided to you to cover this activity (of course:). Management of the activity should be assigned to the Astrophysics Division, and a Program Scientist/Manager (Frank Martin) should be assigned. The activity should be based at a single Center (GSFC), although of course technical resources of many Centers would be used. A Project Scientist should be appointed. My strong recommendation is that this should be Dr. Stephen Maran of GSFC. He is a skeptic on UFO's; he is extremely sharp and energetic; and he is politically acute.

Dr. Maran should be instructed to take a low-key but positive approach to the UFO problem. He should approach the reputable independent UFO groups (APRO, CUFOs, NICAP, MUFON) and make NASA's technical expertise directly available to them. In addition to this, he should work toward the definition of a coherent larger-scale active UFO program that would deal with the continuing phenomenon in a coherent and intellectually sophisticated manner—this has never been done (to my knowledge!).

Changes would be necessary in the draft PIO UFO material that exists.

4

The Administrator may prefer to choose Option 2 (Dodge!). I wouldn't blame him for this, but if he docs, he should do it solidly and consistently. We should not be mushy on UFO's.

Dr. Richard C. Henry

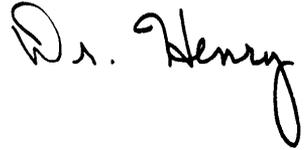
Richard C. Henry

SC/RCHenry:jb:53665:1/17/78

R. C. Henry

## Appendix 14

January 31, 1978, Draft Letter (by Henry) From Dr. Noel Hinners to  
Dr. Harley Rutledge



D R A F T  
RCH: jb  
1/31/78

Dr. Harley D. Rutledge  
Chairman, Physics Dept.  
Southeast Missouri State University  
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Dear Dr. Rutledge:

I am replying to your letter of January 5, 1978,  
concerning the possibility of NASA support for  
your work on UFO's.

You have indicated that you are aware of NASA's  
position on UFO's. In his letter of December 21, 1977,  
to the President's Science Advisor, Dr. Frosch stated  
that with regard to UFO's, NASA "retains an open mind,  
a keen sense of scientific curiosity, and a willingness  
to analyze technical problems within our competence."  
He also indicated that NASA does not feel that a research  
effort could be mounted without "a better starting point than  
we have been able to identify thus far." Because of this,  
NASA is taking no steps to establish a research activity in  
this area.. We do "stand ready to respond to any bona fide  
physical evidence from credible sources."

I gather from the newspaper account which you enclose  
that you have not yet acquired examples of the type of

2

"physical evidence" which Dr, Frosch referenced. Thus, I am not in a position to encourage you to submit a proposal.

If you have substantial "non-physical" evidence on specific sightings or encounters, I do suggest that you provide details to Allen Hynek (P. O. Box 11, Northfield, Illinois 60093, Phone 312/491-1870). He has just started a compilation of case reports for the Government of France.

Sincerely,

David Williamson, Jr.  
Assistant for Special Projects

SC \_\_\_\_\_  
Henry

SC \_\_\_\_\_  
Norris

SD \_\_\_\_\_  
Stofan

Original Signed by  
Noel W. Hinners FEB 9 1978  
Hinners

SCH/RCHenry:jb:53665:1/31/78

## Appendix 15

## NASA Information Sheet 78-1, "Unidentified Flying Objects"



INFORMATION SHEET

Number 78-1

Prepared by:

LFF-3/Public Services Branch  
Office of External Relations  
NASA Headquarters  
Washington, DC 20546UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

The information contained here has been compiled to respond to queries on Unidentified Flying Objects directed to the White House as well as NASA.

NASA is the focal point for answering public inquiries to the White House relating to UFOs. NASA is not engaged in a research program involving these phenomena, nor is any other government agency.

BACKGROUND

In July of 1977, Dr. Frank Press, Director of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President, wrote to Dr. Robert A. Frosch, the NASA Administrator, suggesting NASA should answer all UFO-related mail and also to consider whether NASA should conduct an active research program on UFOs. In a letter dated December 21, 1977, Dr. Frosch agreed that NASA will continue to respond to UFO-related mail as it has in the past and, if a new element of hard evidence that UFOs exist is brought to NASA's attention from a credible source, NASA will analyze the unexplained organic or inorganic sample and report its findings.

Quoting from Dr. **Frosch's** December 21 letter: "...If some new **element** of hard evidence is brought to our attention in the future, it would be entirely appropriate for a NASA laboratory to analyze and report upon an otherwise unexplained organic or inorganic sample; we stand ready to respond to any bona fide physical evidence **from** credible sources. We intend to leave the door clearly open for such a possibility.

"We have given considerable thought to the question of what else the United States might and should do in the area of UFO research. There is an absence of tangible or physical evidence available for thorough laboratory analysis. And, because of the absence of such evidence, we **have** not been able to devise a sound scientific procedure for investigating these phenomena. To proceed on a research task without a sound disciplinary framework and an exploratory technique in mind would be wasteful and probably unproductive.

"I do not **feel** that we could mount a research effort without a better starting point than we have been **able** to identify thus far. I would therefore **propose** that NASA take no steps to establish research in this area or to convene a symposium on **this subject**.

"I wish in no way to indicate that NASA has come to any conclusion about these phenomena as such; institutionally, we retain an open mind, a keen sense of scientific curiosity and a willingness to analyze technical problems within our competence."

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Reports of unidentified objects entering United States air space are of interest to the military as a regular part of defense surveillance. Beyond that, the U.S. Air Force no longer investigates reports of UFO sightings.

This was not always the case. On December 17, 1969, the Secretary of the Air Force announced the termination of Project Blue Book, the Air Force program for UFO investigation started in 1947.

The decision to discontinue UFO investigations, the USAF said, was based on: (1) an evaluation of a report (often called the Condon Report) prepared by the University of Colorado and entitled "Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects;" (2) a review of the University of Colorado report by the National Academy of Sciences; (3) past UFO studies; and (4) Air Force experience investigating UFO reports for two decades.

As a result of these investigations and studies, and experience gained from investigating UFO reports since 1948, the conclusions of the Air Force were: (1) no UFO reported, investigated, and evaluated by the Air Force has ever given any indication of threat to our national security; (2) there has been no evidence submitted to or discovered by the Air Force that sightings categorized as "unidentified" represent technological developments or principles beyond the range of present day scientific knowledge; and (3) there has been no evidence indicating that sightings categorized as "unidentified" are extraterrestrial vehicles.

With the termination of Project Blue Book, the Air Force regulation establishing and controlling the program for investigating and analyzing UFOs was rescinded. All documentation regarding the former Blue Book investigation has been permanently transferred to the Modern Military Branch, National Archives and Records Service, 8th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20408, and is available for public review and analysis. Those wishing to review this material may obtain a researcher's permit from the National Archives and Record Service.

Also available:

Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects. **Condon**  
Report study conducted by the University of Colorado under contract **F44620-76-C-0035**. Three volumes, **1,465p**. 68 plates. Photoduplicated hard copies of the official report may be ordered for \$6 per volume, \$18 the set of three, as AD **680:975**, AD **680:976**, and AD **680:977**, from **the** National Technical Information Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, Springfield, VA 22151.

Review of University of Colorado Report on Unidentified Flying Objects. Review of report by a panel of the National Academy of Sciences. National Academy of Sciences, 1969, 6p. Photoduplicated hard copies may be ordered for \$3 as AD **688:541** from the National Technical Information Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, Springfield, VA 22151.

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NASA is aware of the many **UFO** reports made in recent years. However, the majority of inquiries to NASA concerning UFO sightings address themselves to the reported sightings by astronauts during Earth orbital and lunar missions and the report by President Carter while serving as Governor of Georgia.

During several space missions NASA astronauts reported phenomena not immediately explainable. However, in every instance NASA satisfied itself that what had been observed was nothing which could be termed abnormal in the space environment. The air-to-ground tapes of all manned missions are available at the Johnson Space Center, Houston, for review by the serious researcher.

On October 12, 1973, while serving as Governor of Georgia, Mr. Carter responded to inquiries from the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) saying that he had seen a bright, moving object in the sky over Leary, Georgia, in October of 1969. He said the object was visible for 10 to 12 minutes and, at one point, shone as brightly as the Moon. The regional NICAP representative investigated the sighting and reported there was no evidence to support anything beyond placing what Mr. Carter saw in NICAP's "unidentified" category. However, it has been suggested by some students of aerial phenomena that Mr. Carter may have viewed the Planet Venus which, at certain times, may appear many times brighter than a star of the first-magnitude.

Since NASA is not engaged in day-to-day UFO research, it does not review UFO-related articles intended for publication, evaluate UFO-type spacecraft drawings or accept accounts of UFO sightings or applications for employment in the field of aerial phenomena investigation. All such material will be returned with NASA's thanks to the sender.

A number of universities and scientific organizations have considered UFO phenomena during periodic meetings and seminars. In addition, a number of private domestic and foreign groups continue to review UFO sighting reports actively. Some of these organizations are:

- (1) National Investigations Committee on  
Aerial Phenomena  
John L. Acuff, Director  
Suite 23  
3535 University Boulevard, West  
Kensington, MD 20795  
(301) 949-1267
- (2) The Committee for the Scientific Investigation  
of Claims of the Paranormal  
UFO Subcommittee  
Robert Sheaffer, Chairman  
9805 McMillan Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
(301) 589-8371
- (3) Aerial Phenomena Research Organization  
James and Coral Lorenzen, Directors  
3910 E. Kleindale Road  
Tucson, AZ 85712  
(602) 793-1825
- (4) Mutual UFO Network  
Walter H. Andrus, Jr., Director  
103 Old Towne Road  
Seguin, TX 78155  
(512) 379-9216
- (5) The Center for UFO Studies  
Dr. J. Allen Hynek, Director  
924 Chicago Avenue  
Evanston, IL 60202  
(312) \*491-1780

February 1, 1978