

UFO conspiracy theory

A **UFO conspiracy theory** is any one of many often overlapping conspiracy theories which argue that evidence of the reality of unidentified flying objects as extraterrestrial visitors is being suppressed by various governments around the world. According to David Morrison, who is a fellow at the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, at least some variants of such theories are backed by little or no evidence.^[1] However, many well-credentialed people claim that

there is a cover-up and/or intentional dismissal of the subject going on by the U.S. government specifically. This is evidenced by the former member of the U.S. senate Mike Gravel, who claims that the White House is suppressing, ignoring and/or marginalizing the evidence in favor of an alien presence,^[2] and many generals, pilots, and government officials who have gone on the record to state the very same thing.^[3]

Believers commonly argue that Earth governments, especially the Government of the United States, are in communication or cooperation with extraterrestrials despite public claims to the contrary. Some of these theories claim that the government is explicitly allowing alien abduction. British researchers have found some evidence of suppression of UFO incidents by governments during the Cold War but have found no evidence of it having a conspiratorial nature. The motive is attributed to the governments' desire to avoid admitting that they could not explain the UFO phenomenon and its associated hysteria at its height.^[4]

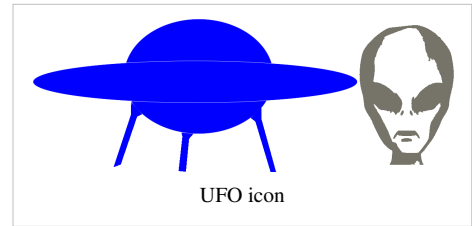
Origins

Charles Fort's 1919 *The Book of the Damned* exposed a small but influential group of readers to Fort's extensive references to unidentified objects. Fort himself was extremely critical of scientific consensus, and his book contained extensive references to reports he said were "damned" or ignored by scientific "dogma". The Fortean Society was founded in 1931 to promote his works and over time its members included H. L. Mencken, R. Buckminster Fuller and Frank Lloyd Wright. According to the Durant Report on the CIA's top-secret 1953 Robertson Panel, "The writings of Charles Fort were referenced to show that 'strange things in the sky' had been recorded for hundreds of years."

These "strange things in the sky" captured the world's attention in the summer of 1947. Kenneth Arnold's description of nine shiny metallic-looking objects flying at an estimated 1,200 mph on June 24 was followed by sightings all over the United States and Canada, and later the entire globe. On July 9, 1947 the Roswell Daily Record ran a headline stating, "RAAF Captures Flying Saucer On Ranch in Roswell Region". The Army Air Force changed the story the next day, saying instead that a balloon had crashed with a radar-reflecting disc suspended from it.

By August 1947, a Gallop Poll indicated that 9 out of 10 Americans had heard of flying saucers. A wide diversity of theories were offered in the press about the origin of the UFOs. Some newspapers interviewed Fortean who offered historical context and were among the first to theorize that the objects could be extraterrestrial in origin. This idea was given a fictional treatment by popular AP writer Hal Boyle on July 9 with his story "Trip on a Flying Saucer." The story and its followup installments ran in newspapers all over the nation and detailed Hal's imaginative trip to Mars with an 8 foot tall green alien who is on a scavenger hunt to find Orson Welles.

Donald Keyhoe later began investigating flying saucers for *True Magazine*. Keyhoe was one of the first significant conspiracy theorists, asserting eventually that the saucers were from outer space and were on some sort of scouting mission. Keyhoe claimed to derive his theory from his contacts in Air Force and Navy intelligence. Project Sign, based at Air Technical Intelligence Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and its successors Project Grudge and Project Blue Book were officially tasked with investigating the flying saucers. Edward Ruppelt's book *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*,^[5] reports that many people within these research groups did in fact support



the hypothesis that the flying saucers were from outer space.

Keyhoe later founded NICAP, a civilian investigation group that asserted the US government was lying about UFOs and covering up information that should be shared with the public. NICAP had many influential board members, including Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, the first director of the CIA. To date no substantiating evidence for NICAP's assertions has been presented beyond accounts that are anecdotal and documented hear-say or rumor.^[1]

Popular culture and opinions

Various UFO conspiracy ideas have flourished on the internet and were frequently featured on Art Bell's program, *Coast to Coast AM*. Before retiring as host on the program, Art Bell expressly said he did not necessarily accept every caller's claims but only offered a forum where they would not be openly ridiculed.^[6]

In fiction, television programs (*The X-Files* and *Stargate*), films (*Men in Black* and *Independence Day*) and any number of novels have featured elements of UFO conspiracy theories. Fictionalized elements may include the government's sinister operatives from *Men in Black*, the military bases known as Area 51, RAF Rudloe Manor or Porton Down, a rumored crash site in Roswell, New Mexico, the Rendlesham Forest Incident, a political committee dubbed "Majestic 12", or the successor of the UK Ministry of Defence's Flying Saucer Working Party (FSWP).^[1]

Some civilians^[7] suggest that they have been abducted, some among them saying that they were also subjected to extensive physical examinations and others adding that tissue samples including sperm and ova were taken from them. The contention that there is a widespread cover-up of UFO information is not limited to the general public or the UFO research community. For example, a 1971 survey of *Industrial Research/Development* magazine found that 76% of those participating in the survey felt the government was not revealing all it knew about UFOs, 54% thought UFOs definitely or probably existed, and 32% thought UFOs came from outer space.^[8]

Notable persons to have publicly stated that UFO evidence is being suppressed include Senator Barry Goldwater, Admiral Lord Hill-Norton (former NATO head and chief of the British Defence Staff), Brigadier General Arthur Exon (former commanding officer of Wright-Patterson AFB), Vice Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter (first CIA director), astronauts Gordon Cooper and Edgar Mitchell, former Canadian Defence Minister Paul Hellyer, and the 1999 French COMETA report by various French generals and aerospace experts. Beyond their testimonies and reports no substantiating evidence has been presented to support their statements and conclusions. According to the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry little or no evidence exists to support them despite significant research on the subject by non-governmental scientific agencies.^[1]

Chronology

Following is a general abbreviated chronology of significant events, statements and personalities, *pro and con*, related to UFO conspiracy theories.

1930s

On the night before Halloween in 1938, Orson Welles directed *The Mercury Theatre on the Air* live radio adaptation of H. G. Wells's classic novel, *The War of the Worlds*. By mimicking a news broadcast, the show was quite realistic sounding for its time, and some listeners were fooled into thinking that a Martian invasion was underway in the United States. There was widespread confusion, followed by outrage and controversy. Some later studies^[citation needed] have argued that the extent of the panic was exaggerated by the contemporary press, but it remains clear that many people were caught up, to one degree or another, in the confusion.

In other countries, reactions were similar. In 1949, part of the script for *The War of the Worlds* was read out over the radio in Quito, Ecuador without announcement, as if it were a major piece of breaking news. Huge crowds of people emerged onto the streets and sought refuge inside of churches with their families. When the radio station was informed of this, its radio announcers broadcasted the fact that there was no invasion. An angry mob formed and

burned the station to the ground, resulting in somewhere between six and twenty deaths. Many other countries also experienced problems when broadcasting *The War of the Worlds*.^[9]

According to U.S. Air Force Captain Edward J. Ruppelt,^[10] the Air Force's files often mentioned the panicked aftermath of the 1938 *War of the Worlds* broadcast as a possible reaction of the public to confirmed evidence of UFOs. However, the files have not been made available to corroborate his assertions.

1940s

The Great Los Angeles Air Raid

"The Great Los Angeles Air Raid" also known as "The Battle of Los Angeles" is the name given by contemporary sources to the imaginary enemy attack and subsequent anti-aircraft artillery barrage which took place from late 24 February to early 25 February 1942 over Los Angeles, California.^[11]

Initially, the target of the aerial barrage was thought to be an attacking force from Japan, but Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox speaking at a press conference shortly afterward called the incident a "false alarm." A small number of modern-day UFOlogists have suggested the reported targets were extraterrestrial spacecraft.^[11]

When documenting the incident in 1983, the U.S. Office of Air Force History attributed the event to a case of "war nerves" likely triggered by a lost weather balloon and exacerbated by stray flares and shell bursts from adjoining batteries.^[12]

Ghost rockets

In 1946 and 1947, there were numerous reports of so-called ghost rockets appearing over Scandinavian countries, primarily Sweden, which then spread into other European countries.^[13] One USAF top secret document from 1948 stated that Swedish Air Force Intelligence informed them that some of their investigators felt that the reported objects were not only real but could not be explained as having earthly origins. Similarly, 20 years later, Greek physicist Dr. Paul Santorini publicly stated that in 1947 he was put in charge of a Greek military investigation into reports of ghost rockets sighted over Greece [Timothy Good 1988, p 23; Donald Keyhoe, p 142].^[13] Again, they quickly concluded the objects were real and not of conventional origin. Santorini claimed their investigation was killed by U.S. scientists and high military officials who had already concluded the objects were extraterrestrial in origin and feared public panic because there was no defense.^[14]

Roswell Incident

In 1947, the United States Air Force issued a press release stating that a "flying disk" had been recovered near Roswell, New Mexico. This press release was quickly withdrawn, and officials stated that a weather balloon had been misidentified. The Roswell case quickly faded even from the attention of most UFOlogists until the 1970s. There has been continued speculation that an alien spacecraft did indeed crash near Roswell despite the official denial. For example, retired Brigadier General Arthur E. Exon, former commanding officer of Wright-Patterson AFB, told researchers Kevin D. Randle and Donald R. Schmitt^[15] that a spacecraft had crashed, alien bodies were recovered, and the event was covered up by the U.S. government. Exon further claimed he was aware of a very secretive UFO controlling committee made up primarily of very high-ranking military officers and intelligence people. His nickname for this group was "The Unholy Thirteen" (see also Majestic 12)^[16]

Mantell Incident

The 1948 death of Air Force pilot Thomas Mantell (the so-called Mantell Incident) may have contributed to a distrust of governmental UFO studies. Mantell's airplane crashed and he was killed following the pursuit of an aerial artifact he described as "a metallic object...of tremendous size" (Clark, 352).^[17] Project Sign personnel investigated the case and determined that Mantell had been chasing the planet Venus, a conclusion which met with incredulity. Later this theory was changed to include a Skyhook balloon instead of Venus, an explanation which continues to be

debated to this day.

Project Sign

The U.S. Air Force may have planted the seeds of UFO conspiracy theories with Project Sign (established 1947) (which became Project Grudge and Project Blue Book). Edward J. Ruppelt, the first director of Blue Book, characterized the Air Force's public behavior regarding UFOs as "schizophrenic": alternately open and transparent, then secretive and dismissive. Ruppelt also revealed that in mid-1948, Project Sign issued a top secret Estimate of the Situation concluding that the flying saucers were not only real but probably extraterrestrial in origin. According to Ruppelt, the Estimate was ordered destroyed by Air Force Chief of Staff Hoyt Vandenberg.^[10]

1950s

The 1950s saw an increase in both governmental and civilian investigative efforts and reports of public disinformation and suppression of evidence.

The UK Ministry of Defence's UFO Project has its roots in a study commissioned in 1950 by the MOD's then Chief Scientific Adviser, the great radar scientist Sir Henry Tizard. As a result of his insistence that UFO sightings should not be dismissed without some form of proper scientific study, the Department set up the Flying Saucer Working Party (or FSWP).^[18]

In August 1950, Montanan baseball manager Nicholas Mariana filmed several UFOs with his color 16mm camera. Project Blue Book was called in and, after inspecting the film, Mariana claimed it was returned to him with critical footage removed, clearly showing the objects as disc-shaped. The incident sparked nation-wide media attention.

Frank Scully's 1950 *Behind the Flying Saucers* suggested that the U.S. government had recovered a crashed flying saucer and its dead occupants near Aztec, New Mexico, in 1948. It was later revealed that Scully had been the victim of a prank by "two veteran confidence artists".^[19]

Donald Keyhoe was a retired U.S. Marine who wrote a series of popular books and magazine articles that were very influential in shaping public opinion, arguing that UFOs were indeed real and that the U.S. government was suppressing UFO evidence. Keyhoe's first article on the subject came out in True Magazine, January 1950, and was a national sensation. His first book, *Flying Saucers Are Real* also came out in 1950, about the same time as Frank Scully's book, and was a bestseller. In 1956, Keyhoe helped establish NICAP, a powerful civilian UFO investigating group with many inside sources. Keyhoe became its director and continued his attacks on the Air Force. Other contemporary critics also charged that the United States Air Force was perpetrating a cover-up with its Project Blue Book.

Canadian radio engineer Wilbert B. Smith, who worked for the Canadian Department of Transport, was interested in flying saucer propulsion technology and wondered if the assertions in the just-published Scully and Keyhoe books were factual. In September 1950, he had the Canadian embassy in Washington D.C. arrange contact with U.S. officials to try to discover the truth of the matter. Smith was briefed by Dr. Robert Sarbacher, a physicist and consultant to the Defense Department's Research and Development Board. Other correspondence, having to do with Keyhoe needing to get clearance to publish another article on Smith's theories of UFO propulsion, indicated that Bush and his group were operating out of the Research and Development Board.^[20] Smith then briefed superiors in the Canadian government, leading to the establishment of Project Magnet, a small Canadian government UFO research effort. Canadian documents and Smith's private papers were uncovered in the late 1970s, and by 1984, other alleged documents emerged claiming the existence of a highly secret UFO oversight committee of scientists and military people called Majestic 12, again naming Vannevar Bush. Sarbacher was also interviewed in the 1980s and corroborated the information in Smith's memos and correspondence. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, Smith granted public interviews, and among other things stated that he had been lent crashed UFO material for analysis by a highly secret U.S. government group which he wouldn't name.^[21]

A few weeks after the Robertson Panel, the Air Force issued Regulation 200-2, ordering air base officers to publicly discuss UFO incidents only if they were judged to have been solved, and to classify all the unsolved cases to keep them out of the public eye. In addition, UFO investigative duties started to be taken on by the newly formed 4602nd Air Intelligence Squadron (AISS) of the Air Defense Command. The 4602nd AISS was tasked with investigating only the most important UFO cases having intelligence or national security implications. These were deliberately siphoned away from Blue Book, leaving Blue Book to deal with the more trivial reports. (Dolan, 210-211)^[22]

In 1954 an automatic working station for UFO monitoring was installed at Shirley's Bay near Ottawa in Canada. After this station detected the first suspicious event, all data gained by this station was classified as secret, although the cameras of the monitoring station could not make any pictures because of fog.^[23]

1956 saw the publication of Gray Barker's *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers*, the book which publicized the idea of sinister Men in Black who appear to UFO witnesses and warn them to keep quiet. There has been continued speculation that the men in black are government agents who harass and threaten UFO witnesses.

Also in 1956, the group Foundation for Earth-Space Relations, led by film producer Tzadi Sophit, tested their own flying saucer outside the Long Island town of Ridge Landing. It is speculated in Robertson's "The Long Island Saucer" that an FBI cover-up silenced witnesses.^[citation needed]

On January 22, 1958, when Donald Keyhoe appeared on CBS television, his statements on UFOs were precensored by the Air Force. During the show when Keyhoe tried to depart from the censored script to "reveal something that has never been disclosed before", CBS cut the sound, later stating Keyhoe was about to violate "predetermined security standards" and about to say something he wasn't "authorized to release". What Keyhoe was about to reveal were four publicly unknown military studies concluding UFOs were interplanetary (including the 1948 Project Sign Estimate of the Situation and a 1952 Project Blue Book engineering analysis of UFO motion presented at the Robertson Panel. [Timothy Good, 286-287; Richard Dolan 293-295]^{[13][22]}

Astronaut Gordon Cooper reported suppression of a flying saucer movie filmed in high clarity by two Edwards AFB range photographers on May 3, 1957. Cooper said he viewed developed negatives of the object, clearly showing a dish-like object with a dome on top and something like holes or ports in the dome. When later interviewed by James McDonald, the photographers and another witness confirmed the story. Cooper said military authorities then picked up the film and neither he nor the photographers ever heard what happened to it. The incident was also reported in a few newspapers, such as the Los Angeles Times. The official explanation was that the photographers had filmed a weather balloon distorted by hot desert air.^[24]

1960s

Throughout much of the 1960s, atmospheric physicist James E. McDonald suggested—via lectures, articles and letters—that the U.S. Government was mishandling evidence which would support the extraterrestrial hypothesis.^[25]

1970s

Although strictly unrelated to a UFO conspiracy theory, the Watergate affair brought the curtain down on the era when authorities were generally trusted by the public. A decade after the assassination of John F. Kennedy a cottage industry of JFK conspiracy theorists seemed to spring up out of the woodwork, fed by the tabloids. UFO conspiracy theories found fertile ground in this paranoid zeitgeist.

Clark also notes that many UFO conspiracy theory tales "can be traced to a mock documentary, *Alternative 3*, broadcast on British television on June 20, 1977, and subsequently turned into a paperback book." (Clark, 213–4)^[17]

Holloman Air Force Base

Clark cites a 1973 encounter as perhaps the earliest suggestion that the U.S. government was involved with ETs. That year, Robert Emenegger and Allan Sandler of Los Angeles, California were in contact with officials at Norton Air Force Base in order to make a documentary film. Emenegger and Sandler report that Air Force Officials (including Paul Shartle) suggested incorporating UFO information in the documentary, including as its centerpiece genuine footage of a 1971 UFO landing at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico. Furthermore, says Emenegger, he was given a tour of Holloman AFB and was shown where officials conferred with EBEs. This was supposedly not the first time the U.S. had met these aliens, as Emenegger reported that his U.S. military sources had "been monitoring signals from an alien group with which they were unfamiliar, and did their ET guests know anything about them? The ETs said no" (Clark 1998, 144).^[17] No film was ever presented, however, and the documentary was released in 1974 as *UFO's: Past, Present and Future* (narrated by Rod Serling). The alleged Holloman UFO landing was discussed in the documentary and was depicted with illustrations.

In 1988, Shartle said that the film in question was genuine, and that he had seen it several times.

In 1976 a televised documentary report *UFOS: It Has Begun*^[26] written by Robert Emenegger was presented by Rod Serling, Burgess Meredith and José Ferrer. Some sequences were recreated based upon the statements of eyewitness observers, together with findings and conclusions of governmental civil and military investigations. Rod Serling's introduction says:

"but there are other explanations. What you're witnessing is based on fact. Some will find it fascinating, some may find it frightening, but it is all true—with special thanks to NASA and the Department of Defense for their cooperation in our search for *UFOS: IT HAS BEGUN*."

Experts presenting testimony included Col. Bill Coleman, Chief of Public Information for the United States Air Force 1969-1974, Mr. Al Chap, Air Force Spokesman for the Pentagon and UFOs in 1952, Col. Hector Quintanilla, Dr. J. Allen Hynek, and Dr. Jacques Vallée. This program featured at its climax a scripted scenario of a UFO landing at Holloman AFB:

Rod Serling: "Let's look at an incident that might happen in the future, or perhaps could have happened already. The premise is that contact is made by extraterrestrial beings with representatives of the United States Air Force at Holloman Air Force Base in the deserts of New Mexico".

There follows Serling's voice-over descriptive narration with combination of shots of an air control tower inside and out, telephones, intercoms, voice-over communications, an enacted moving-camera photographic view through the tower window of an empty airfield, live shots of two jets taking off, a moving pan shot of a painted impressionistic illustration of three discs (approaching), close-up enacted live shots of photographic cameras turning and focusing (on empty desert), a live shot of emergency vehicles racing over the landing apron, followed by a painted impressionistic illustration (same style) of a landed UFO craft and two oddly dressed individuals: one just outside the craft and one in the foreground near what could be two Air Force officers of indeterminate rank. Then a live shot of the side of a corrugated steel building through a chainlink gate with chain and padlock is shown, with Rod Serling's voice-over words:

"Arrangements are made by some sort of communication. And the group quickly retires to an inner office in the King-One Area. Left behind stand a stunned group of military personnel. Who the visitors are, where they're from, and what they want is unknown" (sound of a padlock closing).

Robert Emenegger's treatment in this program does not state that such a landing actually took place at Holloman AFB.

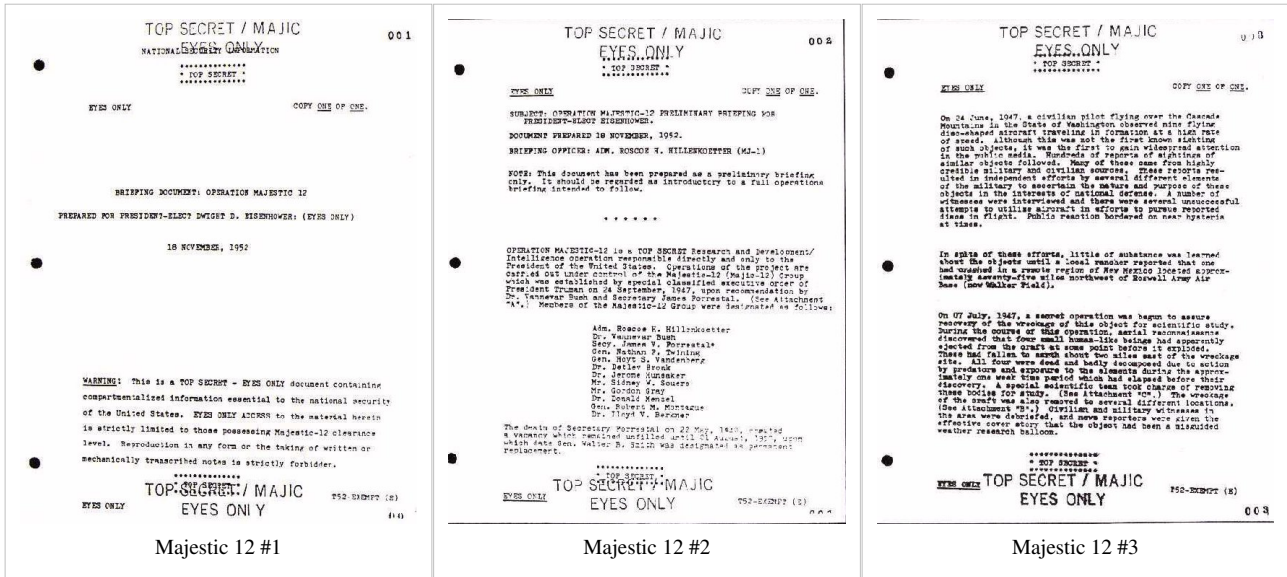
Paul Bennewitz

The late 1970s also saw the beginning of controversy centered around Paul Bennewitz of Albuquerque, New Mexico.^[27]

1980s

MJ-12

The so-called Majestic 12 documents surfaced in 1982, suggesting that there was secret, high-level U.S. government interest in UFOs dating to the 1940s.



Linda Moulton Howe

Linda Moulton Howe is an advocate of conspiracy theories that cattle mutilations are of extraterrestrial origin and speculations that the U.S. government is involved with aliens. □□□□

Milton William Cooper

In the 1980s, Milton William Cooper achieved a degree of prominence due to his conspiratorial writings.^[28]

Bob Lazar

In November 1989, Bob Lazar appeared in a special interview with investigative reporter George Knapp on Las Vegas TV station KLAS to discuss his alleged employment at S-4.^[29] In his interview with Knapp, Lazar said he first thought the saucers were secret, terrestrial aircraft, whose test flights must have been responsible for many UFO reports. Gradually, on closer examination and from having been shown multiple briefing documents, Lazar came to the conclusion that the discs must have been of extraterrestrial origin. In his filmed testimony, Lazar explains how this impression first hit him after he boarded the craft under study and examined their interior.

For the propulsion of the studied vehicles, Bob Lazar claims that the atomic Element 115 served as a nuclear fuel. Element 115 (provisionally named 'Ununpentium' (Uup)) reportedly provided an energy source which would produce anti-gravity effects under proton bombardment along with the production of antimatter used for energy production. Lazar's website says that, if the intense strong nuclear force field of element 115's nucleus was properly amplified, the resulting effect would be a distortion of the surrounding gravitational field, allowing the vehicle to immediately shorten the distance to a charted destination.

Lazar also claims that he was given introductory briefings describing the historical involvement with this planet for 10,000 years by extraterrestrial beings originating from the Zeta Reticuli 1 & 2 star system. These beings are therefore referred to as Zeta Reticulians, popularly called 'Greys'.

Lazar says he has degrees from the California Institute of Technology and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1993, the *Los Angeles Times* looked into his background and found there was no evidence to support his claims.^{[30][31]}

"UFO Cover-Up?: Live!"

On October 14, 1988, actor Mike Farrell hosted "U.S. UFO Cover-Up: Live!" a two-hour prime-time syndicated television special that was broadcast in North America (and elsewhere). William Moore and Jamie Shandera appeared (among many other guests) and discussed the acquisition of the Majestic 12 documents, and introduced their sources "Falcon" and "Condor", allegedly high-level government intelligence officials. Interviewed in shadow and with masked voices, Falcon and Condor disclosed information about the U.S. government's involvement in UFOs and alien interaction, UFO crashes and occupant retrievals, and alien biology. This broadcast also included the first known mention of Area 51 on television; also known as the "strawberry ice cream show" in reference to the informants' remark that a captured EBE enjoyed strawberry ice cream and Tibetan music.^[32]

July 1989 MUFON Convention

The Mutual UFO Network held their 1989 annual convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, on July 1, 1989.

Bill Moore (ufologist) was scheduled as the main speaker, and he refused to submit his paper for review prior to the convention, and also announced that he would not answer any follow-up questions as was common practice. Unlike most of the convention's attendees, Moore did not stay at the same hotel that was hosting the convention.

When he spoke, Moore said that he and others had been part of an elaborate, long-term disinformation campaign begun primarily to discredit Paul Bennewitz: "My role in the affair ... was primarily that of a freelancer providing information on Paul's (Bennewitz) current thinking and activities" (Clark, 1998, 163).^[17] Air Force Sergeant Richard C. Doty was also involved, said Moore, though Moore thought Doty was "simply a pawn in a much larger game, as was I." (ibid.)^[17] One of their goals, Moore said, was to disseminate information and watch as it was passed from person to person in order to study information channels.

Moore said that he "was in a rather unique position" in the disinformation campaign: "judging by the positions of the people I knew to be directly involved in it, [the disinformation] definitely had something to do with national security. There was no way I was going to allow the opportunity to pass me by ... I would play the disinformation game, get my hands dirty just often enough to lead those directing the process into believing I was doing what they wanted me to do, and all the while continuing to burrow my way into the matrix so as to learn as much as possible about who was directing it and why." (ibid., 164)^[17]

Once he finished the speech, Moore immediately left the hotel. He left Las Vegas that same night.

Moore's claims sent shock waves through the small, tight-knit UFO community, which remains divided as to the reliability of his assertions.

Rendlesham Forest Incident

Among Britain's most prominent UFO incidents, and one of the best-documented in the world, occurred outside the US Air Force base at Woodbridge in Suffolk, England, shortly after Christmas 1980. Various lights were seen in neighbouring Rendlesham Forest by numerous servicemen, who investigated and found an apparent landing site. This site was examined by the deputy base commander, Charles I. Halt, who took readings with a Geiger counter and was also witness to a flashing light in the direction of Orford Ness as well as star-like objects in the sky. Copies of Halt's letter to the U.K. Ministry of Defence were routinely released by the American base public affairs staff until the base closed.^[33]

1990s

On November 24, 1992, a UFO reportedly crashed in Southaven Park, Shirley, NY.^[34] John Ford, a Long Island MUFON researcher, investigated the crash. Four years later, on June 12, 1996, Ford was arrested and charged with plotting to poison several local politicians by sneaking radium in their toothpaste. On advice of counsel Ford pled insanity and was committed to the Mid Hudson Psychiatric Center.^[35] Critics say the charges are a frame-up.^[36]

The Branton Files have circulated on the internet at least since the mid-1990s. They essentially recirculate the information presented above, with many asides from "Branton", the document's editor.

Philip Schneider, an engineer formerly working for the U.S. government, made a few appearances at UFO conventions in the 1990s, espousing essentially a new version of the theories mentioned above. He claimed to have survived the Dulce Base catastrophe and decided to tell his tale.^[37]

In 1999 the French government published a study, "UFOs and Defense: What Must We Be Prepared For?" Among other topics, the study concluded that the United States government has withheld valuable evidence.^[38]

2000s

2003 saw the publication of *Alien Encounters* (ISBN 1-57821-205-7), by Chuck Missler and Mark Eastman, which primarily re-stated the notions presented above (especially Cooper's) and presents them as fact.

MoD secret files

Eight files from 1978 to 1987 on UFO sightings were first released on May 14, 2008, to the National Archives' website by the British Ministry of Defence. 200 files were set to be made public by 2012. The files are correspondence from the public sent to government officials, such as the MoD and Margaret Thatcher. The information can be downloaded.^[39] Copies of Lt. Col. Halt's letter regarding the sighting at RAF Woodbridge (see above) to the U.K. Ministry of Defense were routinely released (without addition comment) by the American base public affairs staff throughout the 1980s until the base closed. The MoD released the files due to requests under the Freedom of Information Act.^[40] The files included, inter alia, alien craft flying over Liverpool and Waterloo Bridge in London.^[41]

Disclosure

In the late 2000s, the concept of "disclosure" became increasingly popular in the UFO conspiracy community.

Allegations of evidence suppression

There have been allegations of suppression of UFO related evidence for many decades. There are also conspiracy theories which claim that physical evidence might have been removed and/or destroyed/suppressed by some governments. Some examples follow.

On July 7, 1947, William Rhodes photographed an unusual object over Phoenix, Arizona.^[42] The photos appeared in a Phoenix newspaper and a few other papers. An Army Air Force intelligence officer and an FBI agent interviewed Rhodes on August 29 and convinced him to surrender the negatives, which he did the next day. He was informed he wouldn't be getting them back, but later he tried, unsuccessfully, to retrieve them.^{[43][44]} The photos were analyzed and subsequently appeared in some classified Air Force UFO intelligence reports. (Randle, 34–45, full account)^[15]

A June 27, 1950, movie of a "flying disk" over Louisville, Kentucky, taken by a Louisville *Courier-Journal* photographer, had the USAF Directors of counterintelligence (AFOSI) and intelligence discussing in memos how to best obtain the movie and interview the photographer without revealing Air Force interest. One memo suggested the FBI be used, then precluded the FBI getting involved. Another memo said "it would be nice if OSI could arrange to secure a copy of the film in some covert manner," but if that wasn't feasible, one of the Air Force scientists might have to negotiate directly with the newspaper.^{[45][46]} In a recent interview, the photographer confirmed meeting with

military intelligence and still having the film in his possession until then, but refused to say what happened to the film after that.^[47]

In another 1950 movie incident from Montana, Nicholas Mariana filmed some unusual aerial objects and eventually turned the film over to the U.S. Air Force, but insisted that the first part of the film, clearly showing the objects as spinning discs, had been removed when it was returned to him. (Clark, 398)^[17]

According to some conspiracy theorists, during the military investigation of green fireballs in New Mexico, UFOs were photographed by a tracking camera over White Sands Proving Grounds on April 27, 1949. They claim that the final report in 1951 on the green fireball investigation claimed there was insufficient data to determine anything. Conspiracy theorists claim that documents later uncovered by Dr. Bruce Maccabee indicate that triangulation was accomplished. The conspiracy theorists also claim that the data reduction and photographs showed four objects about 30 feet in diameter flying in formation at high speed at an altitude of about 30 miles. According to conspiracy theorists, Maccabee says this result was apparently suppressed from the final report.^[48]

On January 22, 1958, when NICAP director Donald Keyhoe appeared on CBS television, his statements on UFOs were pre-censored by the Air Force. During the show when Keyhoe tried to depart from the censored script to "reveal something that has never been disclosed before," CBS cut the sound, later stating Keyhoe was about to violate "predetermined security standards" and about to say something he wasn't "authorized to release." Conspiracy theorists claim that what Keyhoe was about to reveal were four publicly unknown military studies concluding UFOs were interplanetary (including the 1948 Project Sign Estimate of the Situation and Blue Book's 1952 engineering analysis of UFO motion). (Good, 286–287; Dolan 293–295)^{[13][22]}

A March 1, 1967 memo directed to all USAF divisions, from USAF Lt. General Hewitt Wheless, Assistant Vice Chief of Staff, stated that unverified information indicated that unknown individuals, impersonating USAF officers and other military personnel, had been harassing civilian UFO witnesses, warning them not to talk, and also confiscating film, referring specifically to the Heflin incident. AFOSI was to be notified if any personnel were to become aware of any other incidents. (Document in Fawcett & Greenwood, 236.)^[49]

John Callahan, former Division Chief of the Accidents and Investigations Branch of the FAA, Washington D.C., also a Disclosure Project witness, said that following the Japan Air Lines flight 1628 incident that involved a giant UFO over Alaska, recorded by air and ground radar, the FAA conducted an investigation. Callahan held a briefing a few days later for President Reagan's Scientific Study Group, the FBI, and CIA. After the briefing, one of the CIA agents told everybody they "were never there and this never happened," adding they were fearful of public panic.^[50]

According to one theory related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the CIA killed Kennedy in order to prevent him from leaking information to the Soviet Union about a covert program to reverse-engineer alien technology (i.e. Majestic 12).^[1]

Nick Cook, an aviation investigative journalist for *Jane's Information Group* and researcher of *Billion Dollar Secret*^[51] and author of *The Hunt for Zero Point*^[52] claims to have uncovered documentary evidence that top-secret US Defense Industry technology has been developed by government-backed Defense Industry programs, beginning in the 1940s using research conducted by Nazi scientists during WWII and recovered by Allied Military Intelligence, then taken to the U.S. and developed further with the collaboration of the same former German scientists at top-secret facilities established at White Sands, New Mexico, and later at Area 51, allegedly resulting in production of real-world prototype operational supersonic craft actually tested and used in clandestine military exercises, with other developments incorporated later into spy aircraft tasked with overflying hostile countries: the UFO story that evidence of alien technology is being suppressed and removed or destroyed was generated and then promoted by the CIA, beginning 1947, as false-lead disinformation to cover it all up for the sake of National Security, particularly during the Cold War, at a time when (his investigations found) the Soviet Union too was developing its own top-secret high-tech UFO craft. Cook's conclusions, alleging suppression of evidence of advanced *human* technology instead of alien, together with what he presents as declassified top-secret documents and blueprints, and his interviews of various experts (some of doubtful reliability), was developed and broadcast as a feature documentary

on British television in 2005 as "UFOs: The Secret Evidence" and in the US in 2006 as a two-part episode on the History Channel's UFO Files, retitled "An Alien History of Planet Earth", with an added introduction by actor William Shatner. The *History Channel* program teaser promised "...a look at rumors of classified military aircraft incorporating alien technology into their designs."

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