

VI. 1970-1982 SIGHTINGS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

In the wake of the Condon committee's report, membership in private UFO organizations dwindled and UFO reports diminished. Many felt that the Air Force had solved all the truly important cases and no longer felt threatened by invasion from another world. Some cases still were reported in the early 1970s (for example, the Delphos, Kansas report--see appendix), but the field was relatively quiet.

A. 1973 FLAP

This quiet period ended in 1973 when a rash of sightings brought attention to the problem once again, and contactee cases found their way to the front pages of the tabloids. By far the most discussed case was the Pascagoula, Mississippi "abduction" incident described in chapter 1, and although this case officially remains open, skeptics claim that the two men had simply had too much to drink, and dreamt the entire event.

But this was not the only case.

The 1973-1974 wave mirrored previous large waves, although by mid-1974 not enough time had passed for investigators to scrutinize the reports thoroughly for misidentifications, hoaxes, and the like. Reports fell into a wide range of UFO sighting categories. Among them were high-level and distant sightings, low-level sightings, car chasing incidents, sightings causing electrical and/or mechanical effects or interference, sightings affecting animals, sightings affecting people physically, sightings causing psychological and mental effects on people, landings with traces left behind and occupant cases. 118/

118/ Jacobs, op. cit., p. 265.

If witness credibility is to be taken into account, certainly one of the most valuable reports came from Ohio Governor John Gilligan and his wife. They said that while driving near Ann Arbor, Michigan on the night of October 15, 1973, they watched a "vertical-shaped, amber colored object" for about a half hour. Gilligan said he didn't know what it was, but was certain it wasn't a bird or a plane. 119/

Philip Klass suggests that the Governor saw the planet Mars which was "at its closest and brightest. . . . And it was to the east-southeast in the sky, near the reported position of Gilligan's UFO." 120/ He goes on to say that the Governor received a lot of publicity, a "not unwelcome thing for anyone in public office." This statement does not square with what has been observed for years, that those who report UFOs are frequently subjected to ridicule by their peers and lose credibility in the community. This is hardly welcome for someone in public office.

Another Ohio incident occurred just three days after Gilligan's report. On October 18, 1973, the four-man crew of an Army helicopter near Mansfield, Ohio spotted a bright red light which seemed to be pacing them. Soon the object began to close on the helicopter and the crew feared a mid-air collision. The crew chief decided to dive to avoid the object, and at an altitude of 1,700 feet, put the craft into a 20 degree dive at 2,000 feet per minute. The red light stayed with them and suddenly the helicopter was illuminated by a green light. After a few seconds, the UFO turned away and disappeared. When the crew chief checked

119/ UFO is Reported by Ohio Governor. The Washington Post, Oct. 18, 1973: All.

120/ Klass, op. cit., p. 288.

his instruments he found that instead of descending, the craft had ascended to 3,500 feet and was climbing at 1,000 feet per minute. Their radio equipment was not working.

Klass concluded that the crew had merely seen a fireball, and points out that the altitude reading is in reference to sea-level, not to the ground it is flying over. Thus the 1,700 foot altitude reported by the crew chief translated into their being only 400 feet above the ground (the altitude of that part of central Ohio is 1,300 feet). He states that someone in the crew instinctively pulled back on the controls to pull the craft out of its dive because he knew they would crash. The radio did not work, either because the tower operator did not answer the crew, which Klass claims happens on occasion, or because the radio operator on board the helicopter was so excited, he did not stop at any one frequency long enough to establish contact. 121/

But there were many cases, and for the first time during a major wave period, there was no official body to investigate the incident. The public was left to its own imagination as to what was happening. David Jacobs summarizes the period in this way:

Scientists, the news media, the general public, and even the Air Force seemed less opinionated, and more willing to suspend judgment on the phenomenon. The 1973-1974 sighting wave lacked the emotionalism and rancor that had characterized the opposing viewpoints in the waves of the 1950s and 1960s. In general, society seemed more open than ever to the theory that the UFO phenomenon might be legitimate regardless of the objects' origins. The bitter battles of the previous years had ended, and only the phenomenon remained. Yet not all the battle scars had healed, and the spectrum of opinion on UFOs was as wide as ever. 122/

121/ Ibid., p. 333-347.

122/ Jacobs, op. cit., p. 285.

B. ANIMAL MUTILATIONS

The flap of 1973 eventually died down, although some UFO reports continued to come to the attention of private organizations. In late 1974 and early 1975, the focus was on a series of cases that involved mutilation of animals. NICAP reported in its February UFO Investigator that:

For the past three months, [we have] been inundated with calls and letters of inquiries regarding reports of animals that have been mutilated in different parts of the country. . . . The prime target area of the mutilated animals centers around Meeker County, Minnesota.

Their report went on to explain that on December 1, 1974, a farmer in Meeker County reported that one of his calves had been mutilated. Investigators found that the calf's lips had been cut off from one inch above the nose to behind the rear of the left jaw bone. The tongue was removed and the jugular vein slit. Interestingly, only about one cup of blood was on the ground, indicating that someone had collected the rest. The edge of the left ear and the reproductive organs had also been removed. There was no sign of entry to or departure from the area, and a circular bare spot in the snow was discovered. This led some to conclude that UFOs were responsible, although NICAP expressed reservations about this explanation. They revealed that other such mutilation incidents had occurred in Dallas and in sections of California.

In May, NICAP followed up on the story by printing a letter by two men who investigated the matter further, one from NICAP and one from APRO. They found that the "circular bare spot" was not circular at all and "was in fact an irregularly shaped area caused by the snow being compacted by other cattle as they came to sniff the body." They concluded that the mutilation was part of

initiation rites for a satanic cult, whose members had been arrested by Federal authorities. This cult had moved through different areas of the country and was responsible for all the mutilation reports. 123/

C. INFORMATION OBTAINED THROUGH THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

In 1977 and 1978, three organizations interested in UFOs obtained the release of about 3,000 UFO-related documents under the Freedom of Information Act from the FBI, CIA, Air Force, and Naval Intelligence. The organizations were Ground Saucer Watch, Citizens Against UFO Secrecy, and Fund for UFO Research. Approximately 300 pages of these documents were provided to CRS for examination by a representative of the Fund for UFO Research. CRS did not, however, verify the authenticity of these documents with the relevant agencies.

1. FBI

The FBI documents covered the time period from 1947 to about 1963. They consist of reports and memoranda about sightings, evaluations of persons reporting the sightings, and directives about procedures to be followed by agents in the field.

It appears from these documents that the FBI was interested in UFOs only from the perspective of its mandate to protect the country's internal security and only to a limited extent--it did not want to act as an agent for the Air Force and collect alleged UFO artifacts or to do all the field work. The FBI's involvement was limited to receiving sighting reports from its special agents and from the public.

123/ Cornett, Robert C. and Kevin D. Randle. Feedback, Readers Write-
Re: Cattle Mutilation in Minnesota. NICAP, UFO Investigator, May 1975: 4.

The following are excerpts from released FBI memoranda and documents:

. . .there are no War Department or Navy Department research projects presently being conducted which could in any way be tied up with the flying disks. (July 10, 1947--16 days after Kenneth Arnold's reported sighting)

. . . the Army is conducting no experimentation with anything which could possibly be mistaken for a flying disc. (August 19, 1947)

This 'flying saucer' situation is not all imaginary. . . .
Something is really flying around. (August 1947)

Several flying objects were observed. They had a mean calculated speed of 27,000 miles an hour. (January 31, 1949)

. . . flying discs are believed to be man-made. . . . It has also been determined that for approximately the past four years the USSR has been engaged in experimentation on an unknown type of flying disc. (March 25, 1949)

Since 1948, approximately 150 observations of aerial phenomena . . . have been recorded in the vicinity of [sensitive] installations in New Mexico. (August 23, 1950)

All the reports dealing with specific sightings of flying objects include similar information regarding the great speed of these objects and their ability to hover. The shapes and sizes of the sighted objects vary.

As the collection, investigation, and filing of reports about UFO sightings became assigned to the Air Force, 124/ the FBI transmitted to that agency the reports it received. Eventually, the FBI received fewer and fewer reports and finally terminated its involvement with UFOs.

124/ As noted in section V, the Air Force initiated Project Sign in 1948 and continued investigating UFO reports officially until 1969.

2. Air Force

The Air Force has a standard reply to any inquiries concerning reports about UFO sightings, as revealed in an unclassified communication dated November 12, 1975 which was released upon the Freedom of Information Act request:

On December 17, 1969 [after the publication of the Condon Report], the Air Force announced the termination of Project Blue Book, the program for the investigation of UFOs. Since then, no evidence has been presented to indicate further investigation by the Air Force is warranted. There are no plans for renewed Air Force involvement in this area.

In November 1975, this reply was used in connection with the numerous overflights and hoverings of UFOs above weapons storage areas and other sensitive locations at several Strategic Air Command bases. Since these UFOs could, or did, affect national security, reports about them were made in accordance with JANAP 146 or Air Force Manual 55-11 guidelines. Reports of these incidents from 1975 are among the released documents.

3. CIA

About 90 to 95 percent of the documents released by the CIA are merely transcripts or translations of reports about UFO sightings obtained from surveys of open, foreign press reports and broadcasts. The following is an excerpt from a released CIA memorandum dated December 2, 1952:

At this time, the reports of incidents convince us that there is something going on that must have immediate attention. . . . Sightings of unexplained objects at great altitudes and traveling at high speeds in the vicinity of major U.S. defense installations are of such nature that they are not attributable to natural phenomena or known types of aerial vehicles.

4. Naval Intelligence

The documents released by Naval Intelligence deal with UFO sighting reports submitted to it by Navy, or related, personnel. The speed of the sighted flying object from one of these reports was calculated to be about 6,700 miles per hour.

There are also some documents from U.S. military attaches and consular officials which deal with UFO sightings in foreign countries.

D. CARTER ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES

A few months after the Carter Administration took office, the White House became a focal point for a new wave of inquiries about UFOs--perhaps as a result of the release of several space-related movies and President Carter's campaign promise to remove the veil of government secrecy from the subject of UFOs. The White House press office requested assistance in this matter from Presidential Science Adviser Frank Press. In a letter dated July 21, 1977, Dr. Press recommended to NASA Administrator Robert A. Frosch that NASA become the focal point for all UFO inquiries and that it should set up a desk to which the White House could forward all the inquiries it received. He also recommended that a small panel of inquiry be formed by NASA to see if any new significant findings had come to light about UFOs since the publication of the Condon Report.

In a September 6, 1977 letter to Press, Frosch replied that NASA was responding to UFO-related inquiries with a form letter. (The form letter, Information Sheet FGM 76-6 of the Office of Public Affairs, stated that an extensive study about UFOs closed with the publication of the Condon Report. It summarized the conclusions of that report and advised where one might purchase a copy.

The form letter went on to say that "investigations are continuing under private auspices" and provided the names and addresses of two private organizations which investigate reported UFO sightings.)

Regarding the panel of inquiry, Frosch said that "Before committing to this, . . . we should assure ourselves that an inquiry is justified."

In a press report dated November 26, 1977, 125/ David Williamson, special assistant to the NASA Administrator, was quoted as not favoring "research on something that is not a measurable phenomenon" and in a letter dated December 21, 1977, Dr. Frosch told Dr. Press that NASA was prepared to "continue responding to public inquiries along the same lines as . . . in the past." Regarding further investigation of UFOs, because of the absence of tangible or physical evidence, "we have not been able to devise a sound scientific procedure for investigating these phenomena. [However,] we stand ready to [analyze] any bona fide physical evidence from credible sources." 126/

E. CURRENT AND RECENT SCIENTIFIC STUDIES

Michael A. Persinger of Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada has published several papers which correlate UFO reportings, tectonic strains, and the release of these strains or earthquakes.

In a 1976 article, Persinger theorized that subsurface geological formations which are under tectonic strains could generate piezoelectric effects just before or during fracturing, as stresses are released, or after unusually intense

125/ Carter Is Facing Rebuff on Reviving UFO Probe. Washington Post, Nov. 26, 1977: B5.

126/ Letter, dated Dec. 21, 1977, from Robert A. Frosch, NASA Administrator to Frank Press, Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President.

and sudden changes in air pressure such as during the passage of a cold front. The electric fields so created would be highly localized and column-like and would exceed 100,000 V/m. The ambient air thus would become ionized and luminous, with the shape of the luminosity determined by local geophysical structures. The luminosity would move in the same directions as the subsurface strain releases or fractures. Thus, the luminosity could hover in place, dart upward or sideways, or disappear into the ground. The movement of the electric field would induce electromagnetic disturbances in the vicinity, such as changes or failures in radio transmission and reception, electric appliances, lighting systems, and compasses, and indirect or direct effects on human beings. 127/

Four years later, Persinger performed statistical analyses of over 20,000 UFO reports between 1951 and 1965, in six earthquake regions of the United States, which indicated that the combined numbers of seismic events during six-month periods in northeastern, eastern, and central regions correlated as much as 0.70 with the number of UFO reports during preceding six-month intervals. Other lags, as well as correlations with total U.S. seismic numbers were not statistically significant. 128/

Further study led Persinger to conclude that UFO reports were indices of natural events associated with accumulating tectonic strain within the Earth's crust. He reported that more than 80 percent of the variance in a sample of UFO report numbers within the central and eastern United States between 1950 and 1966 could be accommodated by entering the appropriate three to five measures of geomagnetic or seismic activity of the previous one to three years. In general,

127/ Persinger, Michael A. Transient Geophysical Bases for Ostensible UFO-Related Phenomena and Associated Verbal Behavior. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, v. 43, Aug. 1976: 215-221.

128/ Persinger, Michael A. Earthquake Activity and Antecedent UFO Report Numbers. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, v. 50, June 1980: 791-797.

UFO report numbers tended to increase two to three years after decreases in geomagnetic activity and the year after increases in the number of local, low-intensity earth tremors. Using these equations, Persinger predicted UFO report numbers within these regions for the years 1967-1981, which he then correlated with actual sightings. 129/

According to Brian Brady of the Denver Research Center of the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Mines, tests are being carried out at that facility in the course of which various rocks and crystals are subjected to pressures until destruction. These pressures are designed to resemble the stresses and pressures which occur in active geological faults. It has been observed that just before their destruction, the pressures cause in these substances piezoelectric effects and visible ionization luminosity in the air near them. The tests were carried out in air and in various gases. Similar glows were observed in all cases. It is possible that, in addition to visible effects, ultrasonic sounds (inaudible to humans, but perceived by various animals) and electromagnetic and other radiations are also produced during these stressings and structure destructions. 130/

129/ Persinger, Michael A. Geophysical Variables and Behavior: III. Prediction of UFO Reports by Geomagnetic and Seismic Activity. Perceptual and Motor Skills, v. 53, Aug. 1981: 115-122.

130/ Verbal communication from Brian Brady, Denver Research Center. May 9, 1983.