



OCTOBER POLITICAL DISCUSSION GROUP PACKET

Life on Mars: NASA finds first hint of alien life

Sarah Knapton

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The first hints of life on Mars have been discovered by NASA.

Intriguing ‘burps’ of methane have been recorded by the Curiosity Rover which may have been produced by bacteria. Most methane on Earth is produced as a waste gas by living organisms.

Curiosity has previously found water bound in the fine soil of the Red Planet, believed to be crucial to life. But if the existence of living, breathing microbes is confirmed, it will be the first evidence of life outside Earth.

“What is interesting is that these spikes of methane are coming and going. They are transient,” said Dr. Paul Mahaffy at NASA.

“At the moment we can’t really tell anything, but these burps are intriguing. We have to keep an open mind.

“We don’t want to eliminate anything, and potentially it could indicate life or evidence of ancient methane trapped which could show ancient life.

“But it’s interesting to think about why it comes and goes. It seems to be suggestive of a localized source.”

NASA claims that with more readings it would be possible to test isotope levels which would prove if the emissions came from a biological source.

Mars is the fourth planet from the Sun and is around half the diameter of Earth. However it is less dense than Earth, having around 15 per cent volume and about 11 per cent mass.

Its red appearance is caused by iron oxide, which gives blood and rust their color. Scientists are divided on what caused the reddening. Some think rain storms billions of years ago caused iron on the surface to rust.

Curiosity has been exploring Mars' Gale Crater, a 96 mile wide depression caused by an asteroid strike, since 2012.

Previous satellite observations have detected unusual plumes of methane on the planet, but none as extraordinary as the sudden "venting" measured at the crater.

The new discovery, reported in the journal *Science*, came from gas samples by Curiosity's Tunable Laser Spectrometer (TAS), an instrument that uses intense light to carry out chemical analysis.

The low background level of methane can be explained by the Sun's rays degrading organic material possibly deposited by meteors, said the NASA scientists

But the readings in a 300 meter squared area spiked 10-fold over a period of just 60 Martian days.

By the time Curiosity had travelled a further kilometer, the higher methane levels had disappeared.

In their paper, the US scientists led by Dr. Chris Webster, from Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, wrote: "The persistence of the high methane values over 60 sols (Martian days) and their sudden drop 47 sols later is not consistent with a well-mixed event, but rather with a local production or venting that, once terminated, disperses quickly."

Life is the chief producer of methane on Earth, but there are many non-biological processes that can also generate the gas. It could have come from an asteroid strike. Asteroids contain methane which could be released on impact. However, no recent strikes have been recorded near Gale Crater.

The short time-scale of the methane spikes also means that it is unlikely the gas was released from volcanic deposits trapped in ice, called clathrates. Nor did it appear to come from the release of gaseous methane that had become bound to the soil.

The NASA authors are cautious about jumping to conclusions, but conclude that "methanogenesis" - the formation of methane by microbial bugs known as methanogens - may be one answer to the riddle.

They wrote: "Our measurements spanning a full Mars year indicate that trace quantities of methane are being generated on Mars by more than one mechanism or a combination of proposed mechanisms - including methanogenesis either today or released from past reservoirs, or both."

Gale Crater was created when a large meteor struck the planet 3.5 billion to 3.8 billion years ago. Earlier this month the Curiosity Rover discovered that Mount Sharp, a mound of rock in the middle of Gale Crater was built by sediments deposited in a large lake bed tens of millions of years ago. The crater itself was once a vast ocean, experts believe.

An analysis of rocks at the bottom of a mountain in the middle of the crater show that water flowed at different levels over the course of millions of years. There are still substantial amounts of water ice at the Martian poles.

The rover has now reached the base of Mount Sharp and over the coming months will begin a slow climb. Scientists are especially keen to explore the mountain because its sedimentary layers provide tantalizing snapshots of Martian history.

The question of whether there is, or was, life on Mars may finally be answered by the European Space Agency's ExoMars mission, which will land a 300kg rover on the Red Planet in 2019.

ExoMars will be equipped with a two-meter drill and the ability to detect biomarkers of life. It will not be heading for Gale Crater, however. Because it will land with less precision than Curiosity, the crater and its mountain are considered too potentially hazardous.

"We just need to keep looking," added Dr Mahaffy.

Life on Mars? NASA makes incredible discovery of running water that could sustain aliens or humans

Mirror

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Jasper Hamill

NASA claims to have found evidence of running water on Mars - which could suggest alien lifeforms have lived on the planet.

In a study, researchers said flowing liquid water is almost certainly responsible for mysterious features on the surface of the planet that change with the seasons.

Satellite images have identified narrow streaks, typically less than five metres (16.4 ft) wide, that appear on slopes during warm seasons, lengthen, and then fade when conditions become cooler.

Experts have speculated that water might be involved in the formation of the gully-like features, known as recurring slope lineae (RSL), but only now has evidence supporting the theory come to light.

A new high resolution technique has revealed that RSLs at four locations on Mars contain salt minerals that precipitate from briny water.

The salts, which are absent from the surrounding terrain, are thought to have been left by water flowing down the sides of hills or crater rims.

NASA wrote: "Water is essential to life as we know it. The presence of liquid water on Mars today has astrobiological, geologic and hydrologic implications and may affect future human exploration."

Writing in the journal Nature Geoscience, the scientists led by Phd student Lujendra Ojha, from the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, US, concluded: "Our findings strongly support the hypothesis that recurring slope lineae form as a result of contemporary water activity on Mars."

If confirmed the discovery has major implications for the chances of finding life on Mars, and future human exploration of the Red Planet.

Mars is a cold barren desert today but is thought to have been warmer and wetter billions of years ago, with a thicker atmosphere, rivers and oceans.

Much of the planet's water is believed to have evaporated into space, but some remains locked in the polar icecaps and possibly in pockets underground.

The new research is based on an analysis of spectral data from the American space agency Nasa's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter spacecraft.

Breaking down reflected light into its different wavelengths provides a chemical "fingerprint" of what a substance is made of.

The Mars scientists devised a new method that allowed chemical signatures to be extracted from individual image pixels, providing a much higher level of resolution than had been achieved before.

At four locations, Palikir Crater, Horowitz Crater, Hale Crater, and Coprates Chasma - a huge Martian canyon - they found evidence of RSL salt deposits. The most common salts were magnesium perchlorate, magnesium chlorate and sodium perchlorate, all of which are consistent with flowing briny water.

Just where the water has come from still remains an unsolved mystery.

Theories include the melting of near-surface ice, absorption from the thin Martian atmosphere, and seasonal discharges from local aquifers, layers of water-bearing rock.

"It is conceivable that RSL are forming in different parts of Mars through different formation mechanisms," said the scientists.

Dr. Joe Michalski, a Mars expert at London's Natural History Museum London, said: "These results provide strong evidence that salty water occasionally flows on the Martian surface, even today.

"We know from the study of extremophiles on Earth that life can not only survive, but thrive in conditions that are hyperarid, very saline or otherwise 'extreme' in comparison to what is habitable to a human. In fact, on Earth, wherever we find water, we find life.

"This finding is yet another example of water on Mars, but a hugely important one because it points to environments that could potentially be habitable to certain kinds of bacteria, even today."

Colonies in Space

Richard Gott

New Scientist

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Will we plant colonies beyond the Earth before it is too late? WHY send astronauts to other worlds? After all, some would argue that robots are far better suited to the extremes of space. Automated probes offer a cheaper and safer way to explore the solar system, they say -- just look at the success of NASA's Mars Rovers and the Huygens probe on Titan. Such missions justify their expense by the boost they provide to human knowledge.

By contrast, proponents of human exploration invoke a more romantic argument: the human spirit's desire to tread new land, see new sights or climb virgin peaks, simply "because they are there". Yet there is a more compelling reason to send people. It comes down to a single word: survival. If we remain on Earth we will surely become extinct, and probably long before an expanding Sun roasts our planet. The fact is that we are vulnerable to the same types of catastrophic events that have wiped out other species on Earth. Geological history shows that such extinction events are routine. Tyrannosaurus rex lasted only a few million years. Mammalian species, on average, last just a couple of million years. Our parent species, Homo erectus, lasted about 1.6 million years, while Neanderthals died out after only 300,000 years. We might have conquered the planet but it is just a tiny island in the universe, and species confined to a single island are often found on the endangered list.

So what about colonization? The problem is that it is hard to justify the huge expenditure of sending colonists into space -- probably hundreds of billions of dollars -- when we do not know when catastrophe will strike. Yet thanks to the revolutionary ideas of a medieval Polish astronomer, coupled with some simple maths, it is possible to get a handle on our future. We can estimate how long it will be before the human race is extinguished. We can even determine how long the human space programme can likely be maintained. The clock is ticking, however. Can we hope to colonize a new world in time?

One thing is certain: about 5 billion years from now, the sun will have swelled up to form a red giant. While this bloated sun may not actually engulf our planet it will certainly fry it. Yet we will most likely die out long before then. An asteroid or comet strike could cause a mass extinctions, as could runaway climate change. Avian flu, AIDS, Ebola, Malaria, TB and smallpox also loom, to say nothing of the possibility of a new virus emerging to infect and kill everyone before we know enough about it to respond.

While it is well known that we pose a danger to other species -- just ask the passenger pigeon -- it is not a great leap of reasoning to realise that we also pose a danger to ourselves. Nuclear war, bioterrorism or even nanotechnology gone wrong may yet kill us off. Intelligence of the kind we have, with our aptitude for abstract reasoning and the ability to discern our place in the universe, may turn out to be, as biologist Stephen Jay Gould said, just "one bauble on the Christmas tree of evolution". What's more, Darwin tells us that species usually do not live up to their potential, not least because most species do not leave descendant species.

Not surprisingly, getting off Earth multiplies our chances of survival. If we were to plant a self-supporting colony on Mars, say, we would become a two-planet species. This could as much as double our long-term survival prospects. Colonies are also a great bargain. Send out a few colonists and they can use indigenous materials to sustain themselves and then increase their numbers, as well as seed other colonies elsewhere. The first words spoken on the moon were in English not because England sent astronauts but because it planted a colony in North America that did. A colony on Mars might double our chances of ever going to Alpha Centauri, because 1000 years from now it might be as likely for our descendants on Mars to mount the expedition as for people from Earth to do it.

There is some urgency to this. In the 16th century, the Polish polymath Nicolaus Copernicus suggested that we do not occupy a special place at the centre of the universe, but rather inhabit one of a number of planets circling the sun. Since then we have discovered that the sun is an ordinary star in a run-of-the-mill galaxy, in a typical supercluster of galaxies. The Copernican principle -- that our location in the universe is not likely to be special -- has proved one of the most successful hypotheses in the history of science, playing a role in many discoveries. This perspective also allows us to predict how long the human race will survive.

The basic argument is as follows. If our current location in space-time is not special, we can expect to be living at some random point between the first and last moments of the human race. This can be framed using statistical theory to set upper and lower limits with 95 per cent confidence -- the standard for scientific predictions. Accordingly, we have a 95 per cent chance of being in the middle 95 per cent of our species' lifetime (not in the first 2.5 per cent and not in the last 2.5 per cent). If we find ourselves at the beginning of the 95 per cent stretch then we are 2.5 per cent, or 1/40th, of the way through our existence and our species' future lifetime is 39 times as long as the past. At the end of this middle period, our future is only 1/39 times as long as the past. In other words, we can be 95 per cent certain that the human species will last between 1/39th and 39 times its lifetime so far.

Time is ticking on. Our species, *Homo sapiens*, is about 200,000 years old. That means there is a 95 per cent chance that the human race will last at least another 5100 years, but less than another 7.8 million years. Right now, having no actuarial data on other intelligent species like ourselves, this is arguably the best estimate we can make. Interestingly, this calculation gives us a similar longevity to other mammal and hominid species, yet the prediction is based solely on our past lifetime as an intelligent species -- quite a coincidence, some may think.

Notice that 7.8 million years is a far shorter time than the estimated lifetime of the sun. It is a warning that we may go extinct by some ordinary catastrophe long before our planet's oceans boil.

It seems that we do not have billions of years to get off Earth: we have to colonise before we become extinct here. Worse than that, and essential to our survival prospects, is that we have to get off before the human space programme folds.

The Copernican principle suggests that you or I are likely to live in a century when the human population is high, at a time in which expensive projects like the space programme are possible. If the population falls catastrophically, expensive projects become more difficult. So it's possible that the human space programme will end before the first colonists blast off, leaving our species on Earth, like passengers stranded on the Titanic without a lifeboat.

So when will the human space programme end? In 1993, when it was 32 years old, I predicted it would last at least another 10 months, but less than 1248 years, using the same calculation we applied to the lifetime of our species. It survived those first 10 months. However, the ultimate space race is whether we can colonise another world before the human space programme ends.

Another reason to worry is that we are having this debate on Earth. If humankind remains on the planet, that would make you and me typical -- not special at all. Yet if we eventually colonise a billion habitable planets, then you and I are very special: lucky to be on the first planet out of a billion on which humans live. There would be only one chance in a billion of being so lucky.

An alternative statistical technique called Bayesian inference comes to a similar conclusion to the Copernican method. Even if you originally regarded the idea that humans will be stranded on Earth as equally likely as the idea we will colonise a billion planets in the galaxy, then after observing that you are on the Earth -- the first planet inhabited by humans -- you should regard the "colonising the galaxy" hypothesis as a billion times less likely than the "stranded on Earth" hypothesis.

What does all this tell us? The human space programme has been funded for the past 46 years, and we can expect another 46 years of funding (a period uncertain by that factor of 39). During this time, the most significant project that we could undertake would be to establish a colony on Mars. Mars is a good place for a self-supporting colony capable of growth because the planet has gravity, solar energy and all the chemicals necessary for life, including water. Locating the colony 10 metres underground would protect it from cosmic rays and solar radiation storms. Even on the surface, the Martian atmosphere offers some protection: I estimate that colonists could explore the surface for up to 31 hours a week and still live for about 70 years. As well as offering a good site for a colony, Mars is also very interesting scientifically. If we want to discover whether Mars ever harboured life, having colonists there is one way of finding out.

This colony could start with just eight people. Frozen egg and sperm cells could be used to add genetic diversity. If couples had four children on average, the colony could double in size every 30 years. After 600 years, there could be 8 million people on Mars.

Robert Zubrin, an aerospace engineer and president of the Colorado-based Mars Society, worked out that for every tonne delivered to Mars, you need to launch about 4.9 tonnes into low Earth orbit. To send two craft with eight astronauts to Mars along with two emergency return vehicles -- about 100 tonnes in all -- would require launching a total of 490 tonnes into low Earth orbit from where they would be sent on a trajectory to Mars. Gerard O'Neill, a physicist and founder of the Space Studies Institute in Princeton, New Jersey, calculated that to establish a space colony inside a sealed biosphere, capable of supporting life by recycling air and water, would take at least 50

tonnes of stores per person. Using Zubrin's formula, delivering 400 tonnes of stores to Mars (for eight people) would thus require sending 1960 tonnes into low Earth orbit. Sending the colony and stores, plus emergency return vehicles, would require launching at least 2450 tonnes.

In the past 46 years, NASA's Apollo and shuttle programmes alone have sent approximately 10,600 tonnes into low Earth orbit. Simply matching this tonnage in the next 46 years should be more than enough to establish a self-supporting colony on Mars. NASA's Ares V rocket -- currently in development -- could do the heavy lifting: it is being designed to carry about 130 tonnes into low Earth orbit. The Ares V might take 12 years to develop but, after that, four rockets could be assembled and launched in every two-year cycle. Over a period of 34 years, these rockets could carry 8840 tonnes into low Earth orbit -- more than enough to establish a Mars colony.

Missing the chance to colonise Mars would be a tragic mistake, but one we may make. In 1969 rocket pioneer Wernher von Braun had plans to land astronauts on Mars by 1982, but President Nixon chose not to go ahead with it. The Saturn V assembly plants were decommissioned. Then in 1989, President Bush senior promised to land astronauts on Mars by 2019. In 2004, his son announced a plan to go back to the moon and on to Mars. Yet the first lunar flight probably will not occur before 2019, and there is still no timetable for going to Mars.

In 1970, Arthur C. Clarke wrote *Transit of Earth*, a story about an astronaut on Mars who watched a transit of the Earth and moon in front of the sun, an event occurring on 11 May 1984. Clarke believed astronauts would be on Mars by 1984 to see it, and that by 2001 we would have set off to Jupiter. Seen from Mars, the next transit of the Earth and moon in front of the sun will occur on 10 November 2084. Will humans be on the Red Planet to see it?

What the Government Isn't Saying about UFO'S

Omni

P. Huyghe and J. Berkley

Is the U.S. hiding information about aliens and saucers?

Deep in the bowels of the Pentagon a secret meeting is in progress. Seated at the conference table are three Air Force generals, an Army colonel, several scientists from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and personnel from both the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency. The colonel, Harold E. Phillips, is running the show. The idea for this cozy gathering known as the UFO Working Group was all his.

Phillips has convened this session to discuss the "perfect" UFO incident. The case, he says, involved a whole town full of witnesses. He wants the CIA to send an investigative team. But a CIA representative at the table balks. The agency cannot legally conduct domestic activities, he says. A discussion ensues. Eventually an exception to the rule is found, and two CIA agents, posing as NASA engineers, are sent to investigate the UFO sightings over Elmwood, Wisconsin.

The existence of the 17-member UFO Working Group was revealed for the first time this fall by investigative reporter Howard Blum in his new book *Out There*. According to the former New York Times journalist, the group was established in February 1987 to coordinate a review of the evidence for UFOs and the search for extraterrestrial life. The DIA, of course, denies that the UFO Working Group exists at all. To UFO researchers, the government team is less than impressive. "They seem like a loose-knit, unofficial discussion group called together on the authority of Phillips, a self-appointed UFO guru within the agency," says Larry W. Bryant, who directs the Washington, DC, office of Citizens Against UFO Secrecy (CAUS). Others wonder how the group could have been impressed by the sightings over Elmwood, the proposed home of a welcome center for E.T's. David Jacobs, a history professor at Temple University and the author of *The UFO Controversy in America*, thinks it can mean only one thing. "They're amateurs," he says.

Blum maintains that the group is official DIA business. But he doesn't think the government is harboring any secrets. "They're covering up not what they know, but what they don't know," he says. "They're embarrassed, and even a little frightened, by their inability to explain certain phenomena."

Blum's view that the government knows little more than we do about UFOs is a decidedly "lite" version of the cover-up. The more sinister, traditional view holds that the government has evidence of alien visitations and has for decades kept this knowledge from the public. This "high calorie" version of the cover-up as government conspiracy has been around for decades.

The first to raise a stink about it was Donald Keyhoe, a retired major in the Marine Corps and a former aide to Charles Lindbergh. With the 1950 publication of *Flying Saucers Are Real*, Keyhoe became the first prominent individual to champion the notion that the government was hiding the

existence of UFOs. Keyhoe had such troubles prying UFO information from the Air Force that he quickly became convinced a massive cover-up was taking place. The Air Force was aware that flying saucers were from another planet, said Keyhoe, but they were covering up the fact to prevent a public panic.

Today many of the arguments for or against a government cover-up hinge on a single case. On the evening of July 6, 1947, a large glowing disc was seen over the New Mexico desert. A sheep rancher, who heard an explosion at the time, went out the next morning to find an area of his ranch covered with strange wreckage. Days later the public information officer at the nearby Roswell Army Air Field created a sensation by announcing they were in possession of a crashed flying disc.

Shortly afterward, however, a retraction appeared: The wreckage, officials declared, was actually a "weather balloon." This much is history. Less well-known are reports that a thorough search of the area in the days that followed led to the discovery, miles away from the sheep ranch, of the main portion of the crashed disc. Inside, supposedly, were several small beings who died in the crash. The military is said to have whisked away the wreckage and its occupants. During the past decade more and more people have come forward claiming to have seen the craft and the aliens themselves.

If there is a cover-up, then Roswell is where it all began. "Once Roswell came along, the government had real justification for keeping something under wraps," says Bruce Maccabee, a physicist who directs the Fund for UFO Studies in Mount Rainier, Maryland. "Assuming the Roswell case is true, there must be some groups keeping track of that stuff, keeping it under guard."

Witnesses of the Roswell incident were intimidated, contends Stanton Friedman, a nuclear physicist in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, who has interviewed many of the eyewitnesses and other participants. "People were told not to talk," he says, "no question about it. One officer was told by the acting head of the Strategic Air Command, 'I don't want you to talk about this ever again.' I even have a man who handled the bodies on official assignment down there, and not only was he personally threatened, but he was told that if he talked about this, they'd get his family, too."

More convincing is the lack of official documentation on the case. "We know something crashed," says Barry Greenwood, research director of CAUS. "We know material was gathered. We know that it was shipped out somewhere. So where is the paperwork? Where is the analysis? We just don't see it." But Greenwood, unlike Friedman, is not convinced that Roswell represents the crash of an extraterrestrial spacecraft and its occupants. He takes the "lite" view and thinks the government is just as baffled by the UFO phenomenon as the rest of us.

Thousands of pages of UFO documents generated by the CIA, the FBI, the Air Force, the State Department, and other agencies have been released under the Freedom of Information Act. But these, says Maccabee, offer only indirect evidence of a cover-up: They point to an accumulation of information that wouldn't be there if no one were interested. "It's hard to believe that all those reports would pour into government agencies and no one paid any attention," he says. "It's hard to believe the government would be so stupid." Maccabee believes the government is covering up

the existence of UFOs, covering up that it really doesn't know what's going on, and covering up that it doesn't know what to do about it, namely what would happen if it went public with all this. Government agencies still have hundreds of UFO documents that they refuse to release to UFO researchers. The National Security Agency (NSA) admits to withholding more than 100 UFO-related documents, the CIA refuses to release about 50, and the DIA says it's withholding six. This is black-and-white proof of a cover-up, says Greenwood. "In a literal sense, information is being covered up in being withheld."

The most tantalizing of all the withheld UFO documents are those belonging to the NSA, the super-secret agency whose primary job is eavesdropping on military communications. No one really knows what UFO information its documents contain, but Friedman has an idea what one may be about. Someone working for the agency told Friedman that in March 1967 a listening post picked up communications between Cuban radar installations and two MiG-21 jets sent to intercept a mysterious, bright metallic sphere in Cuban airspace. When the MiG pilots failed to make contact with the object, they were instructed to shoot it down. "Suddenly there was this shrieking from the pilot in the second plane," says Friedman. "The first plane had disintegrated." Friedman's contact says that NSA headquarters was sent a report on the incident. UFO researchers took the NSA to court for its UFO documents in 1980, but federal district court judge Gerhard Gesell, the same judge who presided over the Oliver North case, ruled in the NSA's favor. The agency refuses to release any of its UFO-related documents because to do so would reveal sources and methods, and that would be a violation of national security. But Friedman believes that there is something about the phenomenon itself that the agency regards as a threat to national security. These objects are violating our airspace, he points out, and they show the powerless response of our military systems to such intrusions. Friedman has a name for all this. He calls it the cosmic Watergate.

Philip J. Klass, an aerospace journalist and the field's foremost skeptic, says there is no such thing. He points out that many of the communications intercepted by the NSA come from potentially hostile nations and many of them are coded. So the agency's rationale for not making these documents public is actually quite simple ["They might reveal the location of certain listening posts," he explains, "and even more important, they would reveal that we have cracked and were able to decipher certain codes."]

So if the question is whether the withheld documents contain any answers to the UFO mystery, the answer is, Probably not. "Long ago a lot of us used to think that the government was covering up a knowledge of extraterrestrials and their craft," says Greenwood, who six years ago coauthored *Clear Intent: The Government Coverup of the UFO Experience*. "But we've had a change of attitude. We just don't see the government as having any answers. If they knew what UFOs were all about, I think history would have been a little different than what we now see."

This argument gains power, oddly enough, from the Roswell incident itself. "If it was a UFO that crashed in Roswell," says Jacobs, "a whole series of events would have been set in motion in the government. There would be major studies of it. Hundreds of scientists would have been involved with it over the past forty years. The government would be acting very differently about UFOs than they do now. All of UFO history makes sense if there was not a crash, and none of UFO history makes sense if there was a crash." Jacobs adds, "It's still possible that one could have crashed and there's an entirely different scenario at work."

If the craft at Roswell had been an E.T. craft, insists Klass, then the United States would have wanted to know just how many of these craft were passing overhead. At the very least, he says, we would have established a space-surveillance system similar to the one that was set up three years after the launch of Sputnik. Klass cannot imagine the government doing nothing and simply hoping the aliens are friendly.

Never in his 24 years of UFO investigation has Klass encountered a government cover-up of significant information. If you think there's a cover-up, he says, call your local air base and report that a saucer has just landed in your backyard and that strange-looking creatures are getting out of it. If the government really were trying to keep things under wraps, he says, the voice on the other end would ask for your address and a SWAT team would be there within minutes. Instead, what will happen, says Klass, is that the voice on the other end will simply thank you for calling and suggest that you report your sighting to the local police department or to one of the national UFO groups. That's too simplistic, says Bryant. If they really have hard evidence about aliens and flying saucers, what would they care about what's in your backyard? For the past several years Bryant, who happens to be a Pentagon employee, has been placing ads in military newspapers encouraging anyone with UFO information to come forth and blow the whistle on the government cover-up. So far no one has come forward to reveal what he calls the "ultimate secret" that will motivate the general public, the press, and Congress to resolve the issue. He's not surprised. "So few people in the government really know about UFOs," he says. "And those who don't know are covering up because it's just the way of doing things. It's the bureaucratic way. When in doubt, don't let it out. Don't even let out that you don't know."

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BY PATRICK HUYGHE

CRASH LANDINGS

In one of her sketches, Lily Tomlin plays a bag woman who has encountered some little green men not from outer but from inner space--from the cracks within the world. After talking to them, the bag woman finds a police officer and tells him what she's seen. "You got evidence, lady?" he asks. Such is the predicament of UFO researchers. The following five cases of purported UFO crash landings are some of the more curious pieces of evidence about extraterrestrials. Although far from conclusive, each of these cases is still under investigation.

### [The Roswell Incident](#)

After a UFO crashed in remote Lincoln County, New Mexico, in early July 1947, the Air Force base at Roswell Field announced in a press release that it had a "flying disc" of the kind being reported in the newspapers. When the material was taken to the Eighth Air Force Headquarters in Fort Worth, however, the commander, Brigadier General Roger Ramey, said it was from a weather balloon. Ramey's own assistant, Brigadier General Thomas DuBose, as well as Major Jesse Marcel, who led the recovery operation, and others held to the Air Force's original statement.

By 1990 the Center For UFO Studies had interviewed some 250 individuals who were somehow related to the incident--everyone from members of ranch families who lived near the crash site to high-ranking Air Force officers. Those who expressed an opinion about the debris's nature suspect it is not of earthly origin. For one thing, witnesses claimed the craft contained an undentable thin foil that, after folding, returned to its original shape with no crease mark.

Some of the center's informants independently claimed that bodies--not of human beings--had been recovered a mile or two away.

### The Kecksburg "Acorn"

At 4:15 PM. on December 9, 1965 thousands of people in several Midwestern and Eastern states observed the passage of a glowing object whose long smoke trail remained visible for as long as 20 minutes after the object itself was gone. Investigators who later tracked its trajectory concluded that the object had been moving slightly faster than 1,000 miles per hour (meteors travel at a minimum of 27,000 mph) in a southeasterly direction from Flint, Michigan, to the Cleveland area, where it made a 25 Degrees turn and headed east. Outside Kecksburg, Pennsylvania, a number of local people observed the object descend in a smooth and controlled fashion.

Those who ventured into the woods in the evening darkness, according to reports, discovered a large gold, acorn-shaped object that emitted a strange blue light. In a band along the side of the object was hieroglyphiclike writing. Soon, as members of the Aerospace Defense Command's 662nd Radar Squadron appeared on the scene, civilians were ordered to leave the area. Later, Kecksburg residents reported an Army flatbed truck carrying something covered with a tarpaulin; its shape was that of a giant upright acorn. The official explanation of the Kecksburg object is "meteorite," although no such object has ever been produced and none of the eyewitness testimony supports that particular interpretation.

### The Tex-Mex Episode

In 1977 a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel swore in an affidavit that many years ago (probably 1950, investigators deduced) he and another pilot (since deceased) had been flying an F-94, then in the experimental stage, out of a Texas Air Force base when ground radar operators told them a UFO was about to come into view. They watched a disc-shaped object make a 90 Degrees turn but were denied permission to chase it. Radar tracking indicated the UFO crashed near the Texas-Mexico border. The colonel and his companion landed their jet, boarded a light plane, and flew to the crash site alighting "in the pasture right across from where it hit." They saw the object in the sand, the colonel now says, surrounded by soldiers.

The Tex-Mex story first surfaced during an investigation by W. Todd Zechel, who heard of it through an Army associate whose uncle said he had participated in a UFO recovery along the border. During the exercise, the uncle claimed, the body of an alien being had been recovered. In later years Zechel managed to locate the uncle, a retired Army colonel. He neither confirmed nor denied the story but refused to discuss it, citing national security concerns.

### Nevada Crash

On April 18, 1962, North American Air Defense Command radar tracked a glowing red object moving west across the United States at a high altitude. By the time it reached the Southwest, it was close enough that witnesses on the ground could hear a roaring sound associated with its passage According to investigator Kevin Randle. witnesses reported the UFO landing near Eureka, Utah, for a few minutes before resuming its flight It disappeared from radar screens 70 miles

northwest of Las Vegas just as observers saw an aerial explosion The incident is an obscure one--the only press account appeared in the Las Vegas Sun on April 19--and few UFOlogists even know of it.

In the Eighties Randle interviewed witnesses, one of whom had been stationed at Nellis Air Force Base at the time. The man claimed that he and other soldiers had been put on a bus with closed windows and taken to a site in the desert to pick up the wreckage of what looked like a flying saucer. The soldiers were told only the craft was something secret. Randle is now looking for other members of the alleged recovery team.

### Disc in the Desert

In the Seventies veteran UFO researcher Raymond Fowler investigated the case of the pseudonymous "Fritz Werner," an engineer who served at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and later at the Atomic Proving Ground in Nevada. In an affidavit Werner swore that on May 21 1953 he and others were driven to nearby Indian Springs Air Force Base, put on a bus with blackened windows, and informed that they were to participate in the recovery of a "supersecret Air Force vehicle." After four hours they were let out in what Werner surmised was the Kingman Arizona, area. They were shown an oval object that "looked like two deep saucers. one inverted upon the other," about 30 feet in diameter His particular job he asserted was to determine how fast the craft had been traveling when it hit the sand. At one point, Werner claimed, he happened to look into a tent at the site; there he saw the "dead body of a four-foot, humanlike creature in a silver, metallic-looking suit " As he was leaving he talked briefly with an airman who said that he had seen the interior of the craft, where there were "two swivel-like seats as well as instruments and displays."

All participants were sworn to secrecy Another investigator, Leonard Stringfield, interviewed a former Air Force metallurgist who claimed that in the spring of 1953 he had been flown blindfolded to a "hot and sandy area" to participate in the recovery of a vehicle much like the one Werner described.

# The Science Behind UFO'S

*Philip Plait*

*Astronomy magazine*

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UFO field guide

**When an unidentified object appears in the sky, witnesses sometimes scramble to report a flying saucer. But even the strangest sightings have astronomical or technological explanations**

It was crisp that late night in February 1997 as my father and I wandered the banks of Florida's Indian River. We weren't alone: Thousands of people were with us, all waiting for the launch of the space shuttle Discovery. I had spent two years working on a camera packed up inside Discovery and was eager to see it safely on its way to the Hubble Space Telescope.

The mood was festive despite the hour and the chill, all of us chatting and enjoying ourselves as we watched the countdown clock tick to zero. But then, just before launch, we had a close encounter.

It started with lights on the horizon, not far from the shuttle launch complex. We saw several of them, seemingly in formation along a curved line, moving slowly toward our location.

"Planes?" I muttered to my dad, but then remembered the strict no-fly zone NASA enforced around the facility. The lights clearly were not stars, and they were moving relative to each other, so they couldn't be satellites or a solid body. Still, they were obviously traveling as a group.

Certainly I never would have admitted to myself that they were ... you know.

Then the noise wafted over us. An odd sound, clearly coming from the overhead objects -- a repeated staccato noise, weird but familiar. My brain spun like a wheel in mud, trying to get traction. But just as the lights were directly above us and I could make out their shapes, the noise became clearer as well.

They were ducks. Quacking. We were hearing quacking. The lights around us were illuminating their bodies, and when the birds had been farther off, the powerful spotlights playing over the shuttle had lit them, making them appear as if they were emitting their own light.

We turned as they flew past us, on to whatever ducky destination they had planned, their quacks fading. We looked at each other and laughed, maybe just a tad too loudly. Relieved, we walked back to the car where the rest of our family was waiting for us to join them in watching Discovery thunder into space, taking with it a camera that would view the cosmos with cold, certain physics and logical mathematics.

## **The harsh light of reality**

I look back at that evening fondly, and not just because it started several years of fascinating Hubble observations. I also learned a valuable lesson.

I am an astronomer, a scientist, a skeptic, a hard-nosed realist. And for a moment -- just a moment -- I was fooled by ducks, wondering if just maybe I was seeing something unearthly. If that can happen to me, it can happen to anyone.

In my defense, I did not ever really think I was seeing an alien fleet. But those seconds of disorientation were unsettling. I have considerable experience looking at the night sky, so not knowing what I was witnessing was peculiar.

Imagine if I had been at a different location, somewhat farther away, where the sound was inaudible and the ducks looked like dots. Would I have been able to identify them as birds? Maybe. But it wouldn't have surprised me if someone else had reported a half-dozen unidentified flying objects (UFOs) dogging the shuttle launch. At least in this case we could easily turn them into identified flying objects (IFOs).

But we do see similar UFO reports all the time: lights, rapidly changing color, hovering or darting about, and observed by dozens or hundreds of witnesses. Almost every time, the actual culprit is something mundane (like waterfowl), observed with our imperfect sensory organs and filtered through our easily fooled brains.

Sometimes the explanation turns out to be forehead-slappingly obvious; sometimes it truly is unearthly -- but not in the way witnesses thought. Regardless, it is fun to look into these reports and see what scientific and technological explanations are behind them.

## **DATELINE**

### **March 2010. Euclid, Ohio**

Dozens of people reported a UFO: a bright object on the western horizon, hovering over Lake Erie and nearby Cleveland. The light was intense and lasted for hours. Sometimes it moved, and other times it was stationary, but it returned to the same spot night after night.

The sight was featured in local news media, specifically the Fox network. A national MSNBC segment, hosted by David Shuster, highlighted the phenomenon after the lights reappeared nine nights in a row. Speculation abounded, including, of course, that the light was from an alien spaceship.

The thing is, this UFO really was alien. But it did not contain visitors from an alien world. It was an alien world -- Venus. Here's how we know.

The suburb of Euclid is east of Lake Erie and northeast of Cleveland, and in March of that year, Venus set in the west -- the direction in which people saw the "UFO." The planet also tends to be in similar spots night after night, which explains why the UFO returned repeatedly. And it stands

out: For people unfamiliar with it, Venus is shockingly brilliant -- it is the third-brightest natural object in the sky, after the Sun and Moon.

As the sky darkens after sunset, Venus becomes easier to see. One moment it is not there, and the next -- bang! It's obvious. It is often low on the horizon, and seen through our turbulent atmosphere, the planet appears to dance and change colors, or "scintillate." This same effect makes stars twinkle. Like a prism, the atmosphere can refract light, breaking it up into colors, and Venus can rapidly flash between red, green, and yellow, before going back to white.

But what about the UFO's movement? Well, there's a human perception phenomenon called "autokinesis": Small motions of the head and eye can make a bright spot appear to flit back and forth if it is in front of a dark background -- like Venus and the night sky. In 1799, Prussian geographer Alexander von Humbolt first recorded the effect, which he thought revealed the actual movement of stars. Fifty-eight years later, Swiss psychologist Gottfried Schweitzer discovered that the phenomenon was actually all in people's heads.

There is one last nail in this UFO's coffin: Venus is bright and apparent in the sky. Isn't it curious, then, that none of the witnesses mentioned seeing the UFO and Venus? They wouldn't have -- if the UFO were actually the planet.

While our neighbor Venus is a commonly reported UFO, other planets also confuse eyewitnesses.

## **DATELINE**

### **October 14,2010. New York City**

Reports of UFOs came in all day to the New York City Police Department and the Federal Aviation Administration from witnesses seeing lights moving in formation and then fading from view.

Sensing a story, WNYW-TV sent a reporter to investigate. While interviewing eyewitnesses, she too saw a light in the sky. The correspondent continued to discuss what she saw, and the cameraman aimed and zoomed in on the UFO. In the news footage, the object resolves into five separate lights -- a bright one surrounded by four smaller ones. What could it be? Too bad Galileo Galilei was not walking the streets of the Big Apple on that autumn day. He could have told the reporter what she was seeing, since he first observed those lights back in 1610: Jupiter and its four moons.

There is no guesswork with this one; anyone who has looked at Jupiter through a telescope could watch the recording and confirm this was the gas giant and its largest satellites. To the eye, Jupiter just appears as a single bright "star," but with even small binoculars, you can see it as a disk attended by its four giant moons (which look like fainter, but still distinct, "stars" usually on either side of the planet). A good television camera, like the one WNYW-TV used that day, can easily separate the moons from Jupiter itself, making it appear as a miniature solar system. Though not as commonly reported as Venus -- probably because it is dimmer and higher in the sky -- Jupiter does make the rounds as a UFO imposter.

But a planet does not explain everything. The TV station investigated because of multiple separate UFO reports. They could not all have been Jupiter. Were these sightings real or just a bunch of hot air?

## **DATELINE**

### **Earlier on October 14,2010. New York City**

The sightings were real enough. Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of people saw silvery spots hovering or soaring slowly through the Manhattan sky.

Once again, however, they were not alien craft. They were, in fact, just balloons from a marketing stunt: As part of an event encouraging tourism between the United States and Spain, a company gave away helium balloons, and the recipients released them in droves. When seen from a distance, with the Sun shining on them in the right way (like the ducks), they looked like solid metallic objects -- spaceships.

Releasing objects that float away has become especially popular recently. Sending paper bags with candles suspended beneath them (creating a mini-hot air balloon known as a "sky lantern") into the air, for instance, is a popular wedding tradition. From far away, the balloons can resemble alien vessels because they emit light and move slowly, and many UFOs have been traced to nearby nuptials.

Sometimes, of course, there are also hoaxes of the inflatable kind. In January 2009, New Jersey residents Joe Rudy and Chris Russo released helium balloons with flares underneath to see how the media would react. The result was just as the two men desired: local and national coverage and prominent billing on the History Channel program UFO Hunters. The public was intrigued, especially after Rudy and Russo repeated the stunt four more times. They revealed the hoax April 1, 2009, by posting a written explanation of their reasoning and video evidence online.

During the debacle, local news stations interviewed a pilot, Paul Hurley, who claimed one of these objects buzzed his plane and then shot off to the side. Almost certainly, what Hurley saw was a balloon being caught by the wind and thrown near his aircraft.

Reporters often interview pilots as authoritative sources on UFOs under the assumption that because they watch the sky all the time, they cannot be fooled. But clearly they, and anyone who sees a pattern they do not expect, can. Sometimes pilots even wind up causing a UFO flap.

## **DATELINE**

### **March 13,1997. Phoenix**

Thousands of people reported mysterious lights flying together across Nevada and Arizona. Some witnesses saw a V-shaped craft passing over a large swath of Arizona, while those near Phoenix saw lights hovering above the city and winking out as if accelerating to warp speed. Abundant picture and video records exist, mostly of the second sighting, but the visual evidence combined with conflation of two events helped make the bizarre "Phoenix Lights" a national sensation, with documentaries, books, and websites devoted to them.

The first event was likely jets flying in formation. The human eye and brain connect dots when there are no physical links between them, making discrete objects look as if they are attached together by something solid when they are seen against a contrasting background.

For the hovering lights, the explanation is definitive: Air National Guard flights from Luke Air Force Base in Glendale, Arizona, sent LUU-2B/B flares parachuting as part of a routine test. As the flares fell behind mountains, they disappeared from view, or "winked out." Many witnesses saw the planes, and Lieutenant Colonel Ed Jones, a National Guard pilot who flew one, testified he had dropped flares that night. The evidence for an earthly explanation adds up, and the mystery of the Phoenix Lights is solved.

Lights are the most commonly reported UFOs and the easiest to explain. When UFOs are more exotic, though, the physical mechanisms behind their appearances can be more complicated.

## **DATELINE**

### **December 9, 2009. Norway**

The people of Norway woke up to a most bizarre show: a gigantic, shining, spinning white spiral in the sky, like a huge cosmic pinwheel, with a tighter, longer, bluer coil pointing right at its heart.

People watched in awe as the spiral moved across the sky. Then, after a few seconds, a black circle appeared in its center and expanded, gradually erasing the spiral from the inside out. Moments later, the apparition was gone.

When I saw the pictures and video from this event, for several seconds I was seriously freaked out. Of course, within hours the Web was alight with speculation, claiming everything from "an alien spaceship" to "an unstable transdimensional vortex eaten by its own black hole." Although I put little stock in those explanations, the truth is still fascinating and surprising: In this case, a spaceship really did cause the phenomenon.

The Russian government admitted to launching a projectile from a submarine 26 hours before the spiral appeared and said its third stage had failed. Space historian and Astronomy contributor James Oberg wrote an article in the January 19, 2009, IEEE Spectrum explaining how the anomaly could have resulted from a failed Bulava missile test.

The coiling formation was due to, of all things, a fuel leak. Imagine a garden sprinkler with a nozzle that spins horizontally. Seen from above, the water looks like it is ejected in a spiral, but that is actually an illusion. Each drop shoots straight away from the nozzle, but the head's rotation means each successive drop leaves in a slightly different direction, forming the observed spiral pattern.

The Russian booster was well above the atmosphere when, still loaded with propellant, it suffered a major leak and started to spin rapidly, spewing fuel into space like a huge, flammable sprinkler. The smaller blue coil formed first from a rupture, and moments later a second, bigger leak caused the larger white swirl. The ejected fuel continuously created spiral arms that expanded outward. When the fuel tanks were empty, the arms disappeared from the inside out, causing the dark circle in the center to form and grow. You can see the same principle in action when you turn off the water feed to a sprinkler.

Since this event, witnesses have seen two more such spirals from rocket failures: one again over Norway (a Russian Topol missile) and the other over Australia (SpaceX's Falcon 9 launch system). Ironically, in the end, these spirals are evidence of intelligent life traveling through space. But that life is us.

### **Turning a U into an I**

All of these sightings have one thing in common: They are misidentified flying objects (MFOs?). Venus, Jupiter, balloons, flares, airplanes, and even rockets seem like things you would know when you saw them, but that turns out not to be the case. People even have reported the Moon as a UFO. When you are not expecting to see them, even ordinary things can appear to be extraordinary.

Worse, most people simply are not familiar with what is going on in the sky. They are surprised to learn that planets and satellites are visible from the ground. And the reason for that is simple: People do not look up.

Looking up is the simplest way to learn about the sky. A lot of amazing things are happening literally right above our heads. To be honest, I am happy people report all these "UFOs" because it means they are paying attention. It's a good first step. The all-important second step is turning UFOs into IFOs. That effort has the best reward of all: understanding.

Comprehension adds to the wonder of what we observe. We have the whole universe laid out before us, and to start understanding it, all we really have to do is look up.

I AM AN ASTRONOMER, A SCIENTIST, A SKEPTIC, A HARD-NOSED REALIST. AND FOR A MOMENT -- JUST A MOMENT -- I WAS FOOLED BY DUCKS.

THE THING IS, THIS UFO REALLY WAS ALIEN. BUT IT DIDN'T CONTAIN VISITORS FROM AN ALIEN WORLD. IT WAS AN ALIEN WORLD -- VENUS.

WHEN I SAW THE PICTURES AND VIDEO FROM THIS EVENT, FOR SEVERAL SECONDS I WAS SERIOUSLY FREAKED OUT.

### **UFOS: A TIMELINE**

The first photographic evidence of a UFO came in 1883, when Mexican astronomer Jose Bonilla saw 300 objects flying in front of the Sun while he was researching sunspots at Zacatecas Observatory in Mexico. Recent research by another Mexican astronomer, Hector Manterola, suggests that the mysterious objects were actually pieces of a fractured comet. Since Bonilla's observation, witnesses have reported thousands of UFOs. Here are images of some of the most famous, ranging from the traditional "flying saucer" to more Space Age appearances.

## UFO REPORTS BY STATE

State/Province      Percentage of total North American  
                                 UFO reports

|                    |      |
|--------------------|------|
| 1. California      | 13.2 |
| 2. Washington      | 6.0  |
| 3. Florida         | 5.3  |
| 4. Texas           | 5.2  |
| 5. New York        | 4.5  |
| 6. Illinois        | 3.8  |
| 7. Arizona         | 3.6  |
| 8. Pennsylvania    | 3.4  |
| 9. Ohio            | 3.1  |
| 10. Michigan       | 2.9  |
| 11. Oregon         | 2.5  |
| 12. North Carolina | 2.4  |
| 13. Missouri       | 2.2  |
| 14. Colorado       | 2.1  |
| 15. Ontario        | 2.1  |

Californians spot more UFOs than those in other parts of North America. Just 15 states and provinces account for 60.2 percent of reports. SOURCE; NATIONAL UFO REPORTING CENTER

UFO appearances: Of all UFOs described to the National UFO Reporting Center, these are the 14 most common shapes, by percentage. Spheres and lights tend to have straightforward, astronomical explanations.

UFO reports by year: The number of UFOs described to the National UFO Reporting Center (NUFORC) has increased dramatically over the past 15 years, rising sharply around the same time home Internet use became common. Submitting reports became simple, as did connecting to others

who had witnessed similar sights. The National UFO Reporting Center's database receives thousands of new entries each year. ASTRONOMY: ROEN KELLY, AFTER THE NATIONAL UFO REPORTING CENTER

Venus [brightest) and Jupiter (center top), seen here from Dayton, Ohio, are often reported as UFOs by those unfamiliar with the motions and positions of the planets. When these bodies appear near the horizon, they are subject to more atmospheric effects than objects more directly overhead, causing them to appear to change in color and brightness.

On February 25, 1942, UFOs near Los Angeles led to a military mobilization and a blackout. Before they reached the city, the UFOs disappeared. An hour later, anti-aircraft artillery enacted an air-raid reaction. Conflicting official statements about the targets' nature -- Japanese planes, U.S. planes, stray weather balloons, or nothing -- led to speculation about the potentially alien nature of the UFOs. Known as the Battle of Los Angeles, the event inspired this image of spotlights converging over the city. The question is, "Converging on what?"

Releasing "sky lanterns" has become a common celebratory practice. In this Image, photographed from below, it's easy to see how the objects could appear otherworldly from the perspective of someone unaware of the event. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

Cave Junction, Oregon (1927). UFO CASEBOOK

Redbud, Illinois (1950). DEAN MORGAN/UFO CASEBOOK

Passaic, New Jersey (1952). GEORGE STOCK/UFO CASEBOOK

Two consecutive fuel leaks In a Russian Bulava missile caused these coiling formations in the sky above northern Norway. After it was above the atmosphere, the booster suffered two ruptures and began to spin and spray fuel, forming these spirals much like a sprinkler does with water.

ASTRONOMY: ROEN KELLY (ILLUSTRATION): ODD MAGNE HAUGEN/ALTAPOSTEN (BACKGROUND)

Wallonia, Belgium (1990). IS HENRARDI

Washington, D.C. (1952). UFO CASEBOOK

McMinnville, Oregon (1950). PAUL TRENT

Italy (1960). UFO CASEBOOK

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By Philip Plait

If flying saucers exist, wouldn't Google have already mapped their interiors by now?

FESCHUK, SCOTT

Maclean's

May 4, 2015

Remember UFOs? Young people might not believe it -- but there was a time when claiming to have been abducted by aliens was all the rage among hillbillies, crackpots and anyone desperately trying to explain away a suspicious bum injury.

It's the granddaddy of conspiracy theories: that, for well over half a century, governments have covered up the "fact" that extraterrestrial beings have visited us aboard a wide range of spaceships, each blurrier than the last.

Some still want to believe. This month, the Disclosure Canada Tour visited four major cities to blow the lid off the "truth embargo on the extraterrestrial presence issue." A sextet of nerdlings charged 50 bucks a seat to discuss "Earth's cosmic Watergate" before an audience of many presumed virgins.

The big draw among tour participants was Paul Hellyer. Now 91, Hellyer is a former minister of defence under Lester Pearson, the longest-serving member of the Privy Council and, more recently, a crazy person. He claims to have seen a UFO a few years ago near his cottage, noting, "It looked just like a star." So far as anyone can remember, this marks the first time a UFO witness has made a claim -- and provided the obvious explanation for what he really saw -- in the same sentence. (FYI, Hellyer also believes much of the world is secretly governed by an elite cabal. If he can just figure out how Lee Harvey Oswald faked the moon landing, the guy is a cinch to win Conspiracy Yahtzee.)

The movie-style trailer for the Disclosure Tour is worth a watch. Over some wicked guitar licks, the six "big-name" speakers at the event are introduced in freeze-frame -- their surnames appearing dramatically on screen in block letters. The message? These guys are exactly like those bad asses from *The Expendables*, but with more eczema and delusions.

The highlight comes halfway through. Two men are driving. We view them from the back seat -- possibly for drama-based reasons; more likely because no one associated with this production can afford a GoPro. One guy speculates about other dimensions, then says: "The answer to those questions -- just by the very fact we can ask these questions -- is evidence that there must be some sort of answer out there about any number of those questions." Congratulations, hero: In a single sentence, you managed to make less sense than the final two seasons of *The X-Files*.

Still, the tour represented a throwback to a time when conspiracy theorists were agreeably eccentric, unfamiliar with the sort of casual cruelty later displayed by 9/11 and Sandy Hook

"truthers." In a way, these UFO obsessives are even to be admired: They have devoted their life's work to bravely ignoring every piece of evidence that their life's work is really dumb.

To cite just two obvious points:

1. In the age of smartphones, the existence of flying saucers ought to be better documented by now than any other phenomenon, up to, and including, double rainbows and drunken skateboard fails. Let's face it: If UFOs were real, Google would already be mapping their interiors. Click [le_](#) to visit the probe-a-torium! And we'd all be watching reality shows in which Jillian Michaels humiliates our new reptile overlord into getting back in shape after binge-eating the bearded hermits of North Dakota.
2. Governments today would have zero interest in concealing the truth about aliens. In fact, the confirmed presence of extraterrestrials would give Barack Obama the biggest boost of his presidency. The opportunity to greet and/or explode alien species? History would surely give him a mulligan on his foreign-policy missteps if he were to ace interplanetary relations. Think about it: the first black President and the guy who ushered in an era of peace and partnership with the slug zombies of Zorgan 4? Good luck topping that, Hillary.

Here in Canada, meanwhile, it's a safe bet that Stephen Harper would embrace the opportunity to greet an interstellar visitor -- with a series of attack ads. Ragamon the Unquenchable purports to be a murderous, amorphous shape-shifter -- but he's just not up to the job of planetary genocide.

On the bright side, Harper could also be counted on to fast-track new legislation. Within weeks, Canadian parents would be entitled to a \$500 tax credit for each child who spends more than two months of the year enslaved in an alien work camp.

The Search for Extraterrestrial Life

Life

Cynthia Cox

March 2000

Why on earth do we still believe? Psychiatrists say we have sleep disorders. Philosophers say we're looking for God. But astrobiologists say life is probably out there.

Near the foot of the Funeral Mountains, in California's Death Valley, astrobiologist Chris McKay plunges a hypodermic needle into the remains of an old lake. It's a spot that a researcher once said he'd "take hell straight" rather than revisit, the hottest in the Western Hemisphere. McKay is looking for something similar to what may one day be found in Martian salt beds: extraterrestrial life.

In the money-green hills of Brentwood, Tenn., home of Dolly Parton, Sandy Nichols is on the phone, seeking earthlings. He doesn't need to look for extraterrestrial life. It found him 42 years ago, he says, when he was kidnapped asleep and deposited in a flying saucer, as he would be many more times. His mission is to tell humans what aliens want, which is to create a new race because they lost their emotions---or whatever (he hasn't nailed the details). So he's planning the debut of a radio show and a gathering that includes his support group, which helps abductees through the "UFO divorces" many have after they "come out of the UFO closet." Later, Nichols will retire to his glowing outdoor hot tub and contemplate the central truths of his life: The ex-wife has joint custody of his human kids; extraterrestrials have full custody of his alien kids; he's afraid to go to bed. And staring up at the stars, this college-educated husband of a former Air Force captain--and son of a millionaire--may cry, as he often does, at the horror, the wonder, the whatever of it all.

It's the turn of the millennium, and we're dead serious about extraterrestrial life. In part because NASA was so excited by the possible discovery of fossilized life on a Martian meteorite in 1996, it launched a new science: astrobiology. Suddenly 400 astrobiologists were invading the scariest places on earth, looking for organisms in environments that parallel conditions on other planets. Last year, 1.6 million people were signing up to help SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) analyze space signals on home computers. There were setbacks. Two recent Mars expeditions failed, and NASA may soon decide its biennial Mars trips are too ambitious. But a Galileo flyby on January 3 revealed there is probably an ocean--a potential pool of life---on Europa, a Jupiter moon. McKay and others recently reported they had found evidence of life in an Antarctic lake resembling Europa's ocean. And scientists are finding new planets faster and faster. With 100 billion stars in each of 100 billion galaxies, it may be illogical to discount extraterrestrial life.

Meanwhile, according to a LIFE poll, 30 percent of us think aliens have already landed. The number of Americans who say they have been abducted is "staggering," says one St. Louis psychiatrist. Harvard Medical School's John Mack has treated hundreds and has a new book out. There are 300 UFO organizations, 38 UFO magazines. China reportedly has 40,000 ufologists. When ufologist Art Bell, the fourth-highest-rated radio-talk-show host in the U.S., appeared at a New York booksigning, protesters called him the Antichrist.

Why do we care so, fervently?

Roswell, N.Mex., is "west of lost and north of nowhere," draws the cowboy narrator of *UFO Secret: The Roswell Crash*. He is standing on a desert that is said to have turned to glass when a saucer hit it in 1947. (An Army air base issued a press release saying it had found a flying "disk," sparking today's worldwide obsession.) The scene, says a UFO-lollipop-company consultant, "makes it easy to see why the aliens chose to land in Roswell. There's nothing here." Yet the view from above is of such an ancient, awe-inspiring, genuinely alien nowhere. Why would Roswell bother to tip a Stetson to UFOs, let alone worship the gaudy, dubious things?

Anyone driven around by the town's fast-talking convention center director isn't kept in the dark for long. Dusty Huckabee starts with the party line. ("Getcha a video of that puppy," he says of a UFO sighting broadcast that morning on a local CBS affiliate.) But he soon offers his take fiat-out. Maybe aliens crashed here, maybe not. He knows this: Roswell needs 'em. The perfect rows of spindly pecan trees he is passing are beautiful, but their resemblance to cemetery crosses is apt. The stucco ranches are low to the ground and camouflaged in the pastels of the New Mexico sky, as if deferring to the chili and alfalfa fields that once sustained them. But beautiful nowheres are in jeopardy. Farming is no longer enough, and Roswell's military base closed in 1967. "Half the town left," Huckabee says.

On to the International UFO Museum, which occupies the smalltown place of honor—an old movie theater. Inside, it resembles the warehouse headquarters for an FBI sting: newspaper clippings, maps of sightings (called in daily) and phones. Last year, 181,000 visited. The gift shop (alien bottled water, alien underwear, the book *The Aliens and the Scalpel* by a podiatrist who surgically removes alien implants) takes in \$1 million a year. Nearby, in Alien Zone (aliens-in-a-jar), Demi Moore's kids posed for photos with stuffed alienettes. Aliens built five motels. Roswell cares about aliens because we care about aliens. One reason we care: They're cute.

So why do they bring out the "they're out to get us" in us? Some museum staffers are talking conspiracy. Fiber optics, says one, comes from UFOs. General Electric was given the patent "to get it done." He adds that two men in suits sat at a bar in 1997 but didn't drink. They were "watching," says another. "They know we know." Later the staffers back off: They didn't mean G.E. was given alien technology—"just companies like G.E."

Scientists can be like cats who spend hours pushing at doors merely because they're closed. There is none of that methodical, inarticulate stubbornness in Ghis McKay. He's all emotive, articulate stubbornness. For that reason he's a rough-hewn jewel in the crown of the new NASA National Astrobiology Institute. Six times a year he jets off to the harshest places on the planetra--the Gobi Desert, Antarctica--with his bag of disposable clothes. When he returns, the NAI lassos him to speak for it, and none do it better. The man who once bounded impatiently across an Antarctic tundra on a broken leg will suddenly devote exquisite care to his words and audience ("It's dead, Jim, DEAD!" he'll roar in the middle of a dry talk to scientists, rousing them with their own secret: Most are Trekkies). It's the same patience he'll suddenly display when, after pushing colleagues to keep moving, don't sleep, we're almost there..., he gets to a site, turns over a rock and finds a green bug--aaah.

"I go to those meetings," he says, holding up a light sensor that counts sun photons. 'And I say, 'Land in a lake bed! Land in a lake bed!' until they throw me out."

McKay is standing on a spongy lake bed near Death Valley that looks like the world's largest mattress, an analogue for Gusev Crater on Mars. He is speaking of the NASA committee he's on, which is debating whether to cancel some Mars probes. McKay votes no.

Among other problems, he says, NASA tried to land the ill-fated Polar Lander on rocky terrain. He doesn't quite see the point. Why mess with rocks when you can land on a soft, gushy lake bed that's accessible and may be rife with "critters"?

"Look," he says, crouching on a scabrous mound. The only visible life-forms are brittle sage weeds resembling dead witches buried up to their necks in rubble. It should be lifeless beneath, for all is covered in red dust that absorbs light. But under a stone: a green blob, cyanobacteria. If we find such a rock on Mars, we'll know what to do. Turn the sucker over.

It was as if a lightbulb went on after a wormlike fossil was spied in a Mars meteorite in 1996 and NASA chief Dan Goldin found only one biologist in a roomful of advisers. He formed a group that, unlike the rest of NASA, wasn't mostly engineers but a mix of geologists, biologists, physicists and astronomers. Their goal: To answer the question, What is life? This spring NASA will build an arctic "Mars station" for astrobiologists-and an astronaut or two.

Is life out there? "Very likely," McKay says. There are photos of ancient Martian lakes and riverbeds. Mars and Earth may have been similar until 3.8 billion years ago when most or all presumed Martian life died; the planet may have been too small to sustain prolonged plate tectonics. (It may get enough sun. The key is access to a certain amount of energy-solar, geothermal, tidal.) If we find life on Mars, the odds of another Earth will jump.

Why should we care? Whether extraterrestrial life contains our DNA or is of a "second genesis," we'll learn about ourselves. "Medicine and technology should benefit. Satellites have already come from space exploration." Besides, McKay adds, "we're human. We want to know if we're alone."

But we also want to believe aliens are conspiring against us, making money off us, abducting us. Why? Are we that bored? This at first seems true when abductee Sandy Nichols turns out to be a man who hasn't had to work for years and lives in a lush Nashville suburb. A friendly sort in a polo shirt, he introduces two college-educated, 40-something friends. Yes, Tony, a photographer, who says he spied a UFO that filled a third of the sky, is suing the government with Citizens Against UFO Secrecy. Yes, Ann begins sentences with, 'A voice told me...' But when Tony plays a video of an alleged sighting, and a saucer (or trick of light) slowly appears, there is a breakout-the-popcorn air. Boo. It's about boredom.

Then Nichols goes upstairs to do his radio show with abductee cohosts from New York City and San Diego. On air, he and the New Yorker share thyroid problems that Nichols says were caused by aliens and the New Yorker says were cured by them. Another quotes a general whose belief in UFOs was erased from books and says "reptilian" overlords control the "grays." A third, who has

written about falling in love on spaceships, says abductions run in her family. Boredom explains some alienophiles. Not these.

Many psychiatrists think alien abduction is actually sleep paralysis--when we wake still paralyzed in a REM stage and feel terror, convinced of menacing presences. In China it's called *gui ya*, or ghost pressure; in the West Indies *kokma*, or ghost baby. Among 2,000 diagnosed with sleep paralysis, hundreds had experiences similar to alien abduction. We've all seen movie aliens. New demons have simply replaced the old, these psychiatrists say. But half of us have sleep paralysis at least once, and we don't all wake up believing demons are real.

Michael Shermer, author of *Why People Believe Weird Things*, says many abductees recall alien encounters only via hypnosis, in which the vulnerable can be led, or lead themselves, to unreal memories. "Hypnosis is a notoriously flawed method of getting data out of people's heads. It has mined the lives of many." Shermer also says a "pseudo-religion" is at work. Mainstream religion once protected most of us from that dark, frightening sky: God lived there. But the more our probes reach into it--and come up empty--the more we flail about, fashioning our own explanations. The conspiracy angle? "Explains the lack of evidence," he says. Is all this unhealthy? "Can be. Look at Heaven's Gate."

The next day, at the Opryland Hotel, Nichols offers nitty-gritties, which tumble out like the waterfall behind him. He describes his alien kids, one six months, one 18 years. He cries: The aliens made him think he hit one of his human kids. With hypnotherapist Pat Kerr, he cries again and talks of waking with scratches. Kerr says he has post-traumatic stress. Why, she won't say.

Nichols says abductees are "loners," distracted by their other lives. But when they "recover their memories" and find one another, they have "enough friends to fill a ballroom." Faith has brought him some of its practical gifts. It has relieved him of responsibility for perceived flaws. It has brought him friends. It may bring fame.

Nichols's group sits around a campfire in a Tennessee field. There's a caterer who channels energy, a hypnotherapist who handled UFO reports in Vietnam, the field's co-owner who practices the faith of the Indians that once lived here. A man tells a story. He comes from a rural town near a nuclear plant where he would lie in the road because the tar held the warmth of the sun, drinking moonshine, watching UFOs fly by all night. "The yellow ones would glow so bright they'd light up the bugs' eyes," he says. His son says a "moon house" lands in the yard and unfurls a "ladder of light" to climb. The group looks tiny under the vast blank book of the sky. It will seem smaller when we find another planet, another world no religion can quite explain. But for now, who cares? Shhh. Moonshine man is talking. Something about knowing you're abducted when you look at your footprints and "your feet aren't in them anymore."

BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

An expert may be defined as someone who can make you feel stupid for offering your opinion. Fortunately, as physicist Philip Morrison once said, ufology "is a field in which there aren't any experts." So everyone can safely have opinions.

LIFE sought these opinions in an exclusive poll by Yankelovich Partners. The poll reveals that a majority believe there is intelligent life elsewhere and that 1 percent of the population says it has

encountered a being from another planet. The numbers behind these numbers tell much about what unites and divides Americans.

More men (59 percent) than women (49 percent) believe there is intelligent life elsewhere. More Democrats (51 percent), and more Independents (63 percent), share this view than do Republicans (46 percent) or conservative Christians (36 percent). And many more college graduates (61 percent) believe in extraterrestrial life than do those who received no education past high school (46 percent).

But if men are more likely to believe in beings from outer space, they are no more likely to believe such beings have already paid us a visit (about 30 percent of both sexes). Equal numbers of men and women (about 43 percent) also believe UFOs are real; and equal numbers (about 6 percent) claim to have actually seen one. Similarly, the college-educated are less likely to believe in alien visitation (26 percent) than those who never attended college (30 percent), though both groups believe in equal numbers that UFOs are real (42 percent). Almost half believe the government is keeping information from the public about the existence of UFOs. More Republicans believe in this government conspiracy (43 percent) than believe in UFOs (36 percent) and more Democrats (47 percent) and Independents (56 percent) believe in it than Republicans.

The subject of UFOs may stimulate Americans' imaginations and their sense of adventure, but there are limits. If a spaceship were to land on Earth, only one in five would accept an invitation to board, as Richard Dreyfuss did so enthusiastically in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. What happened to the pioneer spirit?

LIFE UFO POLL

1. Do you Think there is intelligent life somewhere in the universe, other than on Earth, Or not?

Yes	54%
No	32%
Not sure*	14%

2 .Do you think intelligent beings from other planets have ever visited Earth, or don't you think so?

Yes	30%
No	54%
Not sure*	16%

3. Do you think the U.S. government is withholding information from the public about the existence of UFOs, or don't you think so?

Yes	49%
No	40%
Not Sure*	11%

4. In your opinion, are UFOs real or just the product of people's imaginations?

Real	43%
Imaginary	42%
Not sure*	15%

5. Have you or anyone you know ever seen a UFO, or haven't you?

Yes, personally	6%
Yes someone I know	13%
No	79%
Not Sure*	2%

6. Have you or anyone you know ever, had an encounter with beings from another planet, or haven't you?

Yes, personally	1%
Yes someone I know	6%
No	92%
Not Sure*	1%

7. If beings from another planet asked you to come aboard their spacecraft, would you go, or wouldn't you?

Yes	21%
No	74%
Not sure*	5%

8. In your opinion, should the U.S. government support scientific observation in search of intelligent life on other planets, or shouldn't it?

Yes	54%
No	41%
Not sure*	5%

*volunteered response

LIFE Poll by Yankelovich PArtners. Survey of 1,564 adults, age 18 and older, conducted January 12-13, 2000. Margin of error; plus or minus 2.5 percent.

UFOs over China

Chris Saunders

Fortean Times

September 2015

The People's Republic of China is renowned for being firmly under the control of one of the world's most guarded and secretive regimes. But, says CHRIS SAUNDERS, if the recent catalogue of strange events reported in the nation's media is anything to go by, some world-changing news could be about to emerge from the Far East...

On 15 May 2014, the Chinese authorities confirmed that three Unidentified Flying Objects had fallen from the sky to land in or near Qiqihar, a city in Heilongjiang province with a population of 5.4 million. Witnesses first heard a piercing sound and then saw a huge fireball crossing the sky. When they went to investigate, they found a round metal object with jagged edges being feverishly examined by "relevant personnel". That didn't stop the witnesses taking photographs (such as the one at right) and posting them online,[1] which generated a heated discussion about the nature of these 'UFOs'.

The crashes occurred shortly after a Russian Proton-M rocket carrying a satellite suffered a devastating failure nine minutes after its launch from Kazakhstan. A Russian investigation committee later concluded that the most likely cause of the failure was a ruptured propellant line, which triggered an automatic shutdown and sent the remains of the rocket crashing to Earth. That seemed to explain the 'downed UFOs', and the theory was confirmed a few days later by China's National Space Administration.[2] Disappointing for ufologists, then - or perhaps not. Footage of the incident appears to show the \$225-million rocket being struck by an object, which some have speculated was a guided missile... or even a UFO.[3] What brought down the Russian rocket is still up for debate - a debate made all the more interesting by the fact that this isn't the first time Heilongjiang province, in the desolate northern reaches historically known as Manchuria, has been implicated in UFO lore. It was also the location of a case that has won notoriety across the world.

THE MENG ZHAOGUO INCIDENT

On the face of it, the story itself isn't so remarkable. Accounts differ in the details, possibly as a result of various interpretations and translations, but most are in agreement on the basic story. In early June 1994, a 29-year-old tree farmer by the name of Meng Zhaoguo was working at Red Flag forest near Harbin, northeast China, when he saw a strange light in the sky. Thinking it was either a downed satellite or helicopter, he set out in an attempt to salvage the wreckage when at some point he was hit in the forehead by a shining light and knocked unconscious. He woke up at home some time later, with no recollection of how he got there.[4]

A few nights later, he was asleep in his bed when he awoke to find he was in the presence of what he described as a "10ft [3m] female alien with six fingers and braided leg fur." Meng Zhao Guo and his visitor then proceeded to copulate for around 40 minutes before the alien disappeared, leaving a two-inch (5cm) scar on the man's thigh as the only physical trace of their encounter. He further claimed that, at some later date, he levitated through a wall and met with a group of three-

eyed aliens on their ship. Apparently fancying a bit more cross-species rumpy-pumpy, he asked to see his lady friend again, only to be rebuffed. He was told that: "On a distant planet the son of a Chinese peasant will be born in 60 years" - that being the length of time needed for the amorous alien to conceive and give birth.[5]

To most people, it sounds like a tall tale. The UFO Club at Wuhan University, who examined the case in 1997, certainly thought so. However, the state-sponsored UFO Research Society concluded that the story was true, citing the case as: "The strongest possible example of direct contact with an extraterrestrial". The UFO Research Society is a powerful organization boasting some 3,000 official members, and since its creation in 1980 it has collected more than 5,000 accounts of close encounters throughout China.[6]

Something else that may be worth considering is the fact that Meng Zhaoguo was only barely literate and, until his experience, claimed never to have heard of alien abductions. In September 2003, he was belatedly given a medical exam, underwent a lie detector test, and was placed under hypnosis in an attempt to prove or disprove his outlandish claims. The results indicated that he was telling the truth. Furthermore, a doctor who examined the scar on Meng's leg concluded that it "could not possibly have been caused by common injuries or surgery".

An often overlooked yet fascinating aspect of the whole incident is the fact that the Ruling Party keeps such a tight grip on the national and provincial media that, even in the age of citizen journalism, nothing slips through the net without good reason. The newsstands and airwaves are awash with shameless propaganda, most of it having a clear message promoting and reinforcing the state's political ideology and Chinese patriotism. There is a standing joke that says if you type 'Tiananmen Square Massacre' into a search engine in China, the result will come back: "What massacre?"

Given their stranglehold on the media, one has to ask why the Chinese authorities are apparently so willing to allow their citizens to ponder the existence of extraterrestrial life. Under normal circumstances, the Ruling Party frowns on its citizens displaying profound belief in anything that doesn't conform to its strict core philosophy or threatens the status quo - let alone anything remotely esoteric. This is a country that banned the second *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie because of perceived "supernatural content",⁷ where Christianity is effectively outlawed, Falun Gong is seen as a threat (see FT125:6,126:07,128:42-45,131:13), and even Buddhism is only tolerated, rather than encouraged, due to its cultural significance.

THE SCIENCE OF UFOLOGY

Unlike in many other nations, there is very little stigma surrounding UFO research in China, where it is an accepted and recognised science taken very seriously by academics. The government allows a print UFO journal to be published regularly; it has an estimated circulation of around 400,000 and many ex-government personnel are said to be vociferous believers. Sun Shili, a once-prominent foreign ministry official, now retired, is president of the Beijing UFO Research Society. He has gone on record numerous times to speak about his personal experiences and his belief that wai xing ren (extraterrestrials) are living among us.[8] A large percentage of China's UFO enthusiasts are respected scientists and engineers, rather than the anoraks, SF buffs or apocalyptic stargazers that inform the Western stereotype, and most of the country's UFO research groups

require a degree to attain membership. Jin Fan, an engineer who heads the Dalian UFO Research Society in the northeast of the country, says: "The study of UFOs is fundamentally different from other things like Falun Gong. This is a purely scientific field, whereas Falun Gong deals with cults and superstition".[9]

There is a growing belief in China that the government has known of the existence of aliens for some time and is moving steadily toward 'full disclosure'. The increased presence of extraterrestrials in the media, according to this theory, is just part of a long-term project to prepare the population for the big unveiling. More standard X-Files-era fare, you might think. But the reasons usually given for other countries concealing the existence of aliens - that it would challenge accepted religion and in turn our world-view - don't apply in atheist China, changing the whole dynamic. Generally speaking, the Chinese would be more psychologically open to any such revelations, as they tend to be both more pragmatic and more easily manipulated than the average Westerner. They are taught not to ask too many questions and expect, even welcome, a certain degree of outside influence on their lives. It is common knowledge, even within the Chinese population, that the government uses the media as a propaganda tool. There have long been whispers of a disclosure race between the US and China, with each country anxious to be the first to reveal irrefutable proof of extraterrestrial life. This theory appeared to be given credence in January 2011 when Xinhua, the official government TV news channel, spontaneously reported that Barack Obama was preparing to announce the existence of aliens to the American people.[10]

MASS MANIPULATION

Recent media coverage would seem to add weight to the 'Chinese disclosure' theory. In October 2010, bizarre reports began emerging that an entire village had disappeared from the Qinling mountains, Shaanxi province, after numerous witnesses contacted local news agencies to report seeing UFOs in the area. For a time, the Chinese Internet was abuzz with testimonies and real-time updates, mainly focused on the inexplicable presence of military personnel who cordoned off the area without explanation. A video was circulated widely online, which appears to show bright blue lights in the sky over the stricken village.[12]

So far, so mysterious. But any hope of a conclusion to these extraordinary claims led to nothing. In fact, subsequent reports in China denied there was any kind of military presence in the vicinity, and put the whole episode down to "rumours". What actually happened in Shaanxi province that night, if anything, is a moot point; the mere fact that the story of the disappearing village was allowed into the public domain in the first place could be telling enough. Conversely, Shaanxi province, largely comprising an expansive 'forbidden zone', is home to up to 100 structures collectively known as the 'Pyramids of China,' including the famed White Pyramid of Xi'an (see FT164:28-32), situated around 40 miles (65km) southwest of the ancient capital.[13] The official line from the Chinese government has always been that the structures are simply burial mounds, but this has long been disputed. The authorities rebuff any and all requests to examine the site, which prompts many to speculate about what they could possibly have to hide. Connections with the alignment of the stars, ancient Egypt, and extraterrestrial visitations have all been put forward.

The disappearing village story surfaced just months after another case had garnered widespread media attention. On 7 July 2010, witnesses reported a comet-like UFO streaking through the sky near Xiaoshan airport in Hangzhou. As a precaution, the airport temporarily ceased operations.[14] Chinese netizens were divided as to the possible origin of the fireball-like object,

with just as many apparently fearing a sudden air strike by America as a UFO. There were also mass sightings that year in Xinjiang, Hunan, Shandong and Jiangsu provinces.

CHINESE ROSWELLS?

Yet another flap occurred in 2012, during which there were at least 100 sightings along the border separating China and India. Troops from the Indian Army's 14 Corps sent reports to their superiors describing "yellow spheres" that appeared to take off from the Chinese side of the border and traverse the sky for several hours before disappearing.[15] A ground-based radar system was moved in but was unable to identify the objects, which officials insisted were not Chinese drones or satellites. Interestingly enough, earlier that year India Daily had published an article stating that China and India both know of the existence of an underground UFO base deep in the tectonic plates in the disputed Himalayan border area of Ladakh, the site of the Sino-Indian war of 1962.16 According to witnesses from both sides, triangular UFOs come out of the ground and climb vertically into the sky. In January 2005, there was also talk of a UFO crash in the region with sources suggesting the crash site was close to Mount Everest and therefore inaccessible, though both China and India were actively engaged in attempts to recover the craft.

There have been at least two other suspected UFO crashes in China. One is said to have occurred in the Gobi Desert, Outer Mongolia, in 1982, and another in an unspecified location around a decade earlier. Both craft are said to be stored in an underground research facility beneath the Taihang Mountains straddling Shanxi, Henan and Hebei provinces - the Chinese answer to Area 51.

If the Chinese military are indeed in possession of a downed spacecraft, the argument goes, it would perhaps go some way to explaining the unprecedented technological advances the country has benefited from in recent decades, in the same way that the West developed such things as microchips and fibre optics in the wake of Roswell. Wang Chang Ting of the UFO Research Society is on record as saying:

“We study the application of UFO phenomena to the national economy, such as new materials and new technologies” [17]

Although marketed as the first Chinese abduction case, the Meng Zhaoguo Incident is not without precedent. On 7 March 1987 in Pingwu county, Sichuan province, a family of three was awakened by a loud, high-pitched hum. They went outside to investigate and were blinded by a beam of yellow light coming from a huge reddish object shaped like a "straw hat" hovering above them. When the beam of light hit them they passed out, only to awake later to find themselves strapped to steel tables in a circular room occupied by three-foot (90cm) tall humanoid creatures with three eyes. The aliens then proceeded to take blood samples from the abductees and probe them with needles, also making an incision on the child's thigh. The next thing the family knew, they were walking down a road seven miles (11km) from their home.[18]

The parallels between this account and the Meng Zhaoguo Incident are extraordinary; within the overall abduction scenario, both cases feature beams of light that render the victims unconscious, three-eyed aliens, and a wound to the thigh. It's possible, of course, that Meng Zhao Guo had read

of the older case somewhere and simply constructed his story around it, whether knowingly or not. But he has been described as a virtual illiterate who passed a lie detector test with flying colours.

ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS

Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of Chinese UFO-related events have occurred post-Mao and coincided with the growth of modern technology. But there are some historical precedents. In 2011, a forum on the Above Top Secret website published a translation of what the poster claimed to be a section of text some 500 years old. It reads, in part,

"In [the] year 1528, a strange star appeared, flew from south-east towards north-west, bright as a giant wheel. The next night it reappeared and descended near a village. A stonemason saw the light and went to investigate [finding] an object shaped like a grinding wheel as big as a house covered in brilliant colours. Two beings inside [which] looked human but not human. [The] stonemason was taken in and his heart was taken out and examined. However, it did not [hurt] and did not bleed. There was a voice [which] sounded human but could not be comprehended.[19]

The account goes on to describe the unfortunate stonemason being taken to a place where there were a sun, moon and stars, but the surrounding landscape was "mostly red-hued and cold." There were no buildings, and the beings were (again) described as having three eyes. After losing consciousness the victim woke up in the same place he was abducted, only to find that an entire year had passed. It's all a little vague when it comes to names and places; not so this account from Jiangsu province.

In 1523, a teacher named Lu Yu who lived in Yugui village was standing outside his home when he noticed two ships "sailing on the tops of the clouds". On the ships, the teacher could see several tall men wearing hats and multi-coloured clothing and holding poles. Lu Yu quickly alerted "ten well-read men," just as the ships were descending, and the entire group were taken aboard. One of the visitors passed a hand over the men's mouths, and they found they could no longer speak. A short time afterwards they disembarked from the ships and their voices returned, though Lu Yu died of unknown causes five days later.[20]

Interactions with UFOs in China could go back a lot further than we think. In fact, the phenomenon could be ingrained deep in Chinese culture. The notion of fire-breathing dragons coming down from the sky and 'Gods' coming out of their mouths or bellies is a recurring theme in Chinese mythology. Depending on which source you use, the Yellow Emperor' Huang Di (traditionally reigned 2697-2597 BC), was either a real person, a mythical creation, a deity, or some combination of the above, and is believed by some to have been at least part I extraterrestrial. According to legend, he came down 'from the heavens' to offer comfort and leadership to humanity, and soon become known as the 'Father of Chinese Culture'. Huang Di is credited with inventing everything from acupuncture to the written language, and is also said to be responsible for such technological advances as bronze coins and the bow and arrow. He lived for 100 years in the Kunlun mountains, Tibet, before returning to the skies in a 'metal dragon'²¹ when his work on Earth was considered complete. Proponents of the 'ancient astronaut' theory speculate that here, as in other examples from prehistory, witnesses were only able to describe what they saw using the limited vocabulary and concepts available to them at the time. Thus the 'metal dragon' noted in ancient texts would today be interpreted as a spaceship of some kind.

On 1 November 2007, China Daily newspaper ran an article entitled "Aliens or Ancestors? The Mysteries of Ancient Sichuan", in reference to the discovery of the Sanxingdui ("Three Stars Mound") archasological site near Guanghan city.[22] In 1986, construction workers unearthed two sacrificial pits containing bronze and gold masks, jade and marble figurines, pottery, and objects made from ivory, all said to be relics of a long lost civilisation. This followed the original discovery of the site by a farmer in 1929. Chinese historians consider the find one of the most important of the 20th century, and date the site to 1000-4000 BC, well before the start of recorded Chinese history. This conflicts with the original hypothesis that the Chinese civilisation arose from the Yellow River basin; and though the Chinese were meticulous recorders of history, no mention is made in any known text of the Sanxingdui people. Even stranger - though only around a quarter of the 12 km² (4.6 square miles) has so far been excavated - is the fact that to date no human remains have been found. Instead it has given up something in the region of 10,000 artefacts, many of which display otherworldly characteristics such as oversized ears and protruding eyes. It has been suggested that the masks and figurines don't depict people at all, but extraterrestrial visitors. Interestingly, many locals continue to report seeing UFOs in the area.

THE FINAL FRONTIER

China's booming economy has led to untold billions being ploughed into the education, defence and space exploration sectors. Conceivably, these could be three different branches of the same massive long-term project, with the ultimate aim of making China a major player on the world stage, where the Ruling Party has always believed it belongs.

Perhaps part of that aim is indeed to make history by winning the 'disclosure' race and, if so, the Chinese certainly appear to be stepping up their efforts. Last year a 'source' leaked footage allegedly showing alien bases on the Moon, with the accompanying report implying that the Chinese are already in contact with the resident aliens![23] This would seem to tally nicely with the current state of the Chinese space programme. The seeds were first sown in the late 1950s, but back then the country lacked the necessary financial resources and didn't succeed in becoming the third Earth nation to send a manned mission into space until Yang Liwei's flight aboard Shenzhou 5 in 2003. Explicit details of the space programme are shrouded in secrecy, but since Shenzhou 5 the missions have become increasingly ambitious and it is believed that plans are in place to have an operational space station by the year 2020.

To wrap things up, earlier this year, video and stills of a group of 37 manmade UFO-shaped structures emerged from Rizhao, Shandong province. The strange collection of buildings appears to have been erected simply to attract tourists to the area, and is indicative of how deeply the UFO phenomenon has infiltrated the public consciousness.[24] This comes five years after the grand unveiling of the 18,000-seater Shanghai World Expo Cultural Center (now the Mercedes-Benz Arena) which resembles, of course, a giant flying saucer.

Inside the Military UFO Underground

Omni

David Michael Kennedy

In 1969, Project Blue Book--the 16-year U.S. Air Force investigation of UFOs--came to an end, and so did the government's interest in extraterrestrial flying discs. Or so the American public has been told. In recent years, numerous individuals and documents from various agencies have emerged from behind the veil of government secrecy to tell a different story. Their spin: that while the government officially abandoned all interest in UFOs, a secret military underground was hot on the trail of suspicious radar blips, saucers, and even the aliens themselves. What follows are the stories of three individuals--two of whom come with impressive military credentials; they say they have glimpsed what seems like evidence of a decades-old cover-up cloaked in the guise of national security. The third interviewee, a propulsion-system engineer, claims he was hired by an independent military contractor to study the innards of an extraterrestrial spacecraft being researched and tested on the Nellis Air Range in central Nevada.

Omni cannot endorse the veracity of the stories told below. In fact, we must emphasize that extraordinary tales like these require extraordinary levels of proof certainly not furnished in our pages, nor, we feel, anywhere else. That said, we'll get to the fun part. In the pages that follow, you'll find strange tales of alien intrigue and UFO woe. Decide for yourself: Are these the ravings of demented hoaxers and madmen or revelations of truth? Their stories, delivered in dossier format, have been edited from interviews conducted by author A. J. S. Rayl during the past year.

NATO Meets E.T.

Name: Robert O. Dean, retired Army command sergeant major

Claim: Back in the Sixties, NATO issued a classified report stating that UFOs were real, of extraterrestrial origin, and had visited the earth. This extraordinary report was said to come out of NATO's command center, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE), located then just outside of Paris, France.

Background: Dean, a highly decorated veteran, served on the front lines in both Korea and Vietnam. In 1963, while assigned to the Supreme Headquarters Operations Center (SHOC), SHAPE's war room, headed up by then-supreme allied commander of Europe, Gen. Lyman Lemnitzer, Dean claims he was able to read the detailed 12-inch-thick NATO report on UFOs.

The Story: ``SHAPE was one of those choice assignments. You had to have a spotless record and pass security background checks. I applied on a whim and got it. I was very proud and pleased. At SHAPE, I was put through more security checks, given a Cosmic Top Secret (yes, this is a real term) clearance, the highest NATO has, and assigned to the Supreme Headquarters Operations Center, known as SHOC, the NATO war room. In those days, the activity would run hot and cold and much of it would depend on how the Soviets wanted to play it. The most intriguing thing to me was that we were continually having a problem with large, metallic, circular objects that would appear over central Europe; these were reported as visual phenomena by our pilots and appeared on radar as well. Some flew in formation, and most of the time we spotted them coming out of the

Soviet Union, over East Germany, West Germany, France, and then they would often circle somewhere over the English Channel and head north, disappearing from NATO radar over the Norwegian Sea. These objects were very large, moving very fast, at very high altitudes--higher than we could reach at the time--and they seemed obviously under intelligent control.

``I was told this had been going on for some time and that in February 1961 there had been quite a scare. Fifty of these objects were spotted on radar and headed in formation from the Soviet Union toward Europe, flying at about 100,000 feet. The Soviets had closed all borders. Everybody went to red alert. All hell broke loose. We really thought 'The War' had started. We scrambled. We knew the Russians were scrambling. It was the largest number of these objects that had been seen. Fortunately--and only by the grace of God--we didn't start bombing and neither did the Russians. In nine minutes, they were gone.

``I was told that then-Deputy Supreme Allied Commander of Europe, Sir Thomas Pike, had been repeatedly requesting information from London and Washington about these objects, but nothing would ever come. We found out later that the Columbine-Topaz spy ring in Paris was intercepting everything and forwarding it to the KGB, which often got intelligence information even before we did. So Pike decided, I was told, to develop an in-house study to determine whether these objects were a military threat.

``In the meantime, the UFO matter literally brought about the establishment of direct communication between the East and West in 1962, which I have always found interesting and ironic. We had pretty well determined by that time that these were not Russian craft, and the Russians had determined they were not ours. So, we came to an understanding, and a direct telephone line was opened between SHOC and the Warsaw Pact Headquarters Command. Of course, a setup was always a possibility, so we had backup ways of checking out whether the Russians were being truthful. But since we were both armed to the teeth and World War III was just ticking away, it was a logical step in the right direction. That idea developed into the hotline between the president of the United States and the soviet premier, following the Cuban Missile Crisis.

``Well, by the time I arrived in 1963, everybody had been talking about the study, and I had heard the rumors, seen the blips on radar, witnessed the commotions, and some of us occasionally even talked about the possibilities. But nothing really prepared me for what I started to read in the early morning hours one night in January 1964.

``It was about 2:00 a.m. and a relatively quiet night when the SHOC controller on duty went into the vault and came out with this huge document. 'Take a look at this,' he said. The title was simply Assessment: An Evaluation of a Possible Military Threat to Allied Forces in Europe. It was numbered, #3, stamped Cosmic Top Secret, had eight inches worth of appendices, dozens of photographs, and had been signed into the vault by German colonel Heinz Berger, SHOC's head of security. I quickly learned that it was based on two and a half years of research, was funded by NATO money, and that only 15 copies were published--in English, German, and French. Each one was numbered. All were classified and ordered to be kept under lock and key.

``Every time I got the chance, from then until I left, I would read a section or two in it. It was the most intriguing document I'd ever read. It was put together by military representatives of every NATO nation and also included contributions from some of the greatest scientific minds. These objects were violating all of our known laws of physics, and the study team had gone to Cambridge, Oxford, the Sorbonne, MIT, and other major universities for input on chemistry, physics, atmospheric physics, biology, history, psychology, and even theology, all of which were separate appendices.

“I read about theories on Einstein's sought-after unified-field theory, the high radiation at various landing sites, and UFO reports that dated back to the Roman era and up to our own F105 pilots' sightings and encounters, and on and on. I had always been a skeptic, but this report, well . . . it concluded that this stuff was not science fiction.

“I read about contact encounters. One incident that had just happened in 1963 involved a landing on a Danish farm. According to the report, the farmer went aboard with the two little beings and two more human-looking men who spoke to him in Danish. The report included parts of his interrogation by government authorities and their conclusions that he was telling the truth. In another incident, according to the reports, a craft landed on an Italian airfield and offered to take an Italian sergeant for a ride. He wet his pants--that's what it said--and was so scared, he didn't go.

“The appendix that really got to me was titled ‘Autopsies.’ I saw pictures of a 30-meter disc that had crashed in Timmensdorfer, Germany, near the Baltic Sea in 1961. The British Army, according to the report, got there first and put up a perimeter. The craft had landed in very soft, loamy soil near the Russian border and so hadn't destructed, but one-third of it was buried in. We and the Russians, who also quickly showed up, had both tracked it.

“Inside, there were 12 small bodies, all dead. There were pictures of the bodies, which looked like the beings known as the ‘grays,’ being laid out and then put on stretchers and loaded into jeeps, and autopsy photos, too. Some of the little grays appeared to not be a reproductive-capable species. The autopsy guys concluded, according to the report, that it looked as if they had been cut out of a cookie cutter--clones with no alimentary tract. They did not ingest or process food as we know it, nor did it appear that they had any system for elimination.

“The craft itself was cut up like a pie into six pieces, put on lowboys and hauled off. Scuttlebutt was that it was given to the Americans and flown to Wright-Patterson Air Force base in Ohio. I looked at these pictures and couldn't believe it. My skin got cold and I thought, My God. I had never really believed we were all alone in the universe, but this was hard to swallow.

“The major conclusions in the NATO report blew me away. There were five: 1) The planet and human race had been the subject of a detailed survey of some kind by several different extraterrestrial civilizations, four of which they had identified visually. One race looked almost indistinguishable from us. Another resembled humans in height, stature, and structure, but with a very gray, pasty skin tone. The third race is now popularly known as the grays, and the fourth was described as reptilian, with vertical pupils and lizardlike skin. 2) These alien visitations had been going on for a very long time, at least 200 years--perhaps longer. 3) The extraterrestrials did not appear hostile since if that were their intent they would have already demonstrated their malevolence. 4) UFO appearances and quick disappearances as well as the flybys were demonstrations conducted on purpose to show us some of their capabilities. 5) A process or program of some sort seemed to be underway since flybys progressed to landings and eventually contact.

“I wanted so badly to copy this thing. I did take a photograph of the cover sheet, which wasn't in and of itself classified. But I didn't want to wind up in Fort Leavenworth. So instead I would go to the bathroom and take notes--surreptitiously, very carefully.

“I have been through an awful lot in my life, but I've never been able to just walk away from that report. I know that I'm taking a chance by violating my oaths. But this is the most important issue of our times--so damn important that I can't think of anything more important, and the public has been deceived and completely kept in the dark about all of this for all these years. It's the biggest scientific, political scandal ever. Besides, what have I got to lose? I'm 64 years old now. Are they

going to bump me off? I have told the truth. My integrity and credibility stand. When is our government going to tell the truth?"

Update: After 27 years of military service, Dean retired and began another 14-year career with the Pima County Sheriff's Department Emergency Services in Tucson, Arizona. In 1990, he gave a lecture at the University of Arizona in which he talked about UFOs. The talk garnered local media coverage. Afterward, he was denied a promotion at the Sheriff's Department, because, he alleged, he believed in UFOs. Dean filed suit and won an out-of-court settlement in March 1992. Now retired, Dean has become a member of several UFO organizations and has begun giving occasional lectures. He is working through "any and all legitimate channels" to uncover a copy of the NATO document and to gather witnesses for an open Congressional hearing on the subject of UFOs.

Official Response: "Our list of classified documents generated by SHAPE at that time does not include any with titles similar to that cited by Mr. Dean," says Lt. Col. Rainer Otte, German Air Force, deputy chief, media section of the public-information office at SHAPE. "Files on military personnel are in all circumstances kept under national control. Information on the security clearance that Mr. Dean held may--if ever--only be released by U.S. authorities."

The Critics' Corner: "This is a fascinating story, but fantastic claims like these need more than one man's testimony to be credible," says Jerome Clark of the Center for UFO Studies. "Unless independent verification comes forth, this remains only an intriguing anecdote, not unlike many others that have circulated since the early UFO era."

Project Galileo

Name: Bob Lazar, independent contract scientist and businessman

Claim: To have worked as a propulsion-system engineer in late 1988 and early 1989 on one of nine extraterrestrial spacecraft being researched and tested on the Nellis Air Range in central Nevada.

Background: From 1982 to 1984, Lazar claims he worked at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico in the Meson Physics lab with a Q-level security clearance. In 1985, while on vacation in Nevada, he wound up buying into a legal Reno brothel; the investment proved so profitable that he didn't have to return to full-time employment for a while. He moved to Nevada in 1986. In 1988, he wanted to get back into scientific work and was hired, he says, to work on the top-secret Project Galileo. Lazar passed a lie-detector test in 1989, arranged by George Knapp, then an anchorman for KLAS-TV, the CBS affiliate in Las Vegas, Nevada, for a special locally aired series, UFOs: The Best Evidence.

The Story: "In 1988, I decided to reenter the scientific community and sent resumes to various people. Finally, I interviewed with a placement firm to work for the Department of Naval Intelligence in a civilian capacity, and in the fall of 1988, I was hired on an on-call basis to work on a project involving advanced propulsion systems. At that point, that's all I knew.

"Not long after, I was flown along with several others out to area 51 on the Nellis Air Range. There, we were put on a bus with blacked-out windows and driven about 15 miles south to the Pappoose dry lake bed, bordered by the Pappoose Mountains, where there was an installation they called 'S4.'

"I was introduced to my supervisor and a co-worker and then given a stack of briefings on various projects, including Project Galileo, which was devoted to the study of nine disc-shaped extraterrestrial craft that were somehow acquired by the U.S. government.

"I was assigned back engineering tasks on the reactor and gravity-propulsion system of one of the discs--essentially to help figure out what made it work. I don't know whether it was a crash

retrieval, although I doubt it, because the disc didn't appear damaged in any way. In the briefing reports, there were pictures of several discs along with some of the information they had already obtained from back engineering research.

“I was stunned and exhilarated at the same time. But there were well-armed guards everywhere, and this place wasn't exactly the kind of environment where you could just start asking any and every question you had. Security, in fact, was oppressive. You were escorted everywhere, even the bathroom. And if your I.D. badge was just the slightest bit out of place, you would be tackled by a guard and held with a gun to your head until your supervisor arrived. And the guards lived for that.

“At times, the whole thing seemed just surreal. There was a poster of the disc I was working on, which I dubbed the Sport Model, on several walls. It read, They're here.

“I dealt with only the power sources and propulsion systems on one of the discs, and I did enter that one disc on several occasions. The disc was approximately 15 feet tall and about 52 feet in diameter. It had the appearance of brushed stainless steel or brushed aluminum. I didn't run a test on it, so I don't know if it was metal, but I did run my hands down the side of it getting in, and it felt cold, like metal, and it looked like metal. It had no physical seams, no welds or bolts or rivets, and it looked as if it were injection molded.

“Inside, there were tiny little seats, much too small to comfortably handle an averaged-sized human. I bumped my head on the ends of the craft, so I concluded that the ceiling curved down to below five feet, 11 inches inside. There was not a right angle cut anywhere in the craft. Everything had a smooth curve to it.

“The reactor, which produced antimatter and then reacted it with matter in an annihilation reaction, was only about 18 inches in diameter and 12 inches tall and was located in the center of the disc. It operated like a tiny ballet, where everything that happened relied on the effect before it. The way it accelerated protons inside of it, the way the heat was converted to electricity, was totally smooth without any wasted heat or latent energy. It was phenomenal, approaching a 100-percent dynamic efficiency. Now that seems impossible when you consider the laws of thermodynamics. All I can say is that this technology is well beyond anything that we now know with our twentieth-century knowledge.

“The reactor is fueled with an element that is not found here on Earth. Part of my contribution to the program was to find out where this element plugged into the periodic chart. Well, it didn't plug in anywhere, so we placed it at an atomic number of 115. It has been theorized for some time that elements around 113, 114, and 115 may become stable and nonradioactive, and this is apparently what we were seeing. Element 115 is a stable element, but one with some interesting properties. It can be used inside the reactor as a fuel, but also as the source of an energy field accessed and amplified by the craft's gravity amplifiers. In other words, the craft was both fueled and propelled by virtue of element 115.

“There was a storage of silver-dollar-sized discs of element 115 from which triangular wedges were cut and put into the reactor. It was a copper-orange color and extremely heavy. While it was not radioactive, we assumed it was a toxic material and consequently handled it as such.

“In all the discs at S4, there were three gravity amplifiers positioned in a triad at the base of the craft. These were the propulsion devices. Essentially, what they did was amplify gravity waves out of phase with those of the earth. The craft operated in two modes--omicron and delta, which indicated how many gravity amplifiers were in use. In the omicron configuration, only one amplifier was used; the other two were swung out of the way and tucked inside the disc. In omicron mode, the crafts can essentially rise and hover but do little else. To leave the atmosphere, however,

all three gravity amplifiers have to be powered up and focused on the desired location. Finally, the crafts do not travel in a linear mode. Rather, we determined that the discs produced their own gravitational fields in order to distort time and space and essentially pull their destinations to them.

“One afternoon, my colleagues and I walked out onto the dry lake bed. The disc on which we had been working, the Sport Model, had already been moved out of the hangar and was beginning to lift off. Except for a slight hissing, it made no noise. It lifted to about 30 feet off the ground. The hissing stopped, and it just hung silently in the air, moving to the left, then right. It was absolutely amazing.

“The way information is compartmentalized, that's all the hands-on information and experience I was allowed to have access to, though we were given the chance on occasion and only for short periods of time to read briefing reports that detailed other aspects of this project. The reports I read that dealt with power and propulsion systems were accurate, and I proved that to myself by working on the system. Still, I draw a hard line between what I know to be true and what I read in the other briefing reports.

“With that understanding, I did read reports about the origin of this disc. According to one of the briefings, it came from the Zeta Reticuli star system. Now obviously I didn't fly in a craft or go to that star system, so I don't really know if it came from there. I didn't speak to any aliens or see any, so I don't know if they exist or not. That report also said that contact was made at a certain date; however, all the dates were in code. Also, according to the report, these beings told our officials that they had been coming here for 10,000 years, that humans are the product of externally corrected evolution, and that they were integral to the accelerated evolution of man.

“My tolerance for the intensive security rapidly diminished. Because of the 24-hour telephone surveillance, they found out I was having marital problems and told me the situation had made me a candidate for ‘emotional instability.’ They then took my security clearance and told me I could reapply in six months.

“Well, I knew the test schedule, and I couldn't resist, so one night I decided to show some friends from a distance what I had been working on. We all caravanned out into the desert where we watched a test flight. We got away with it that time, so we started coming back again and again.

“Anyway, the third time we got caught by the Wackenhut Security guards out on the Bureau of Land Management land that surrounds the range. They turned me in. Needless to say, officials at Nellis weren't happy. I went through a debriefing and was threatened at that time. I was scared and felt that I needed to break away from this before I couldn't.

“Not only did I believe this technology should be given to the greater scientific community, but I also believed my only protection was to get the story out. A friend convinced me to talk to George Knapp at KLAS-TV. I figured if they killed me, then it would simply prove that what I was saying was true.

“There are many scientists who theorize that there simply cannot be extraterrestrial discs here, that aliens could not possibly have come here specifically, because the distance traveled is too great and the energy required too awesome, and that there's no relatively quick way to go that distance even at the speed of light. What I reported is what I experienced, though in some respects I regret going public. If I had it to do over again, I might be more inclined to stay on as one of the boys.”

Update: In 1990, after Lazar says he was released from Project Galileo, he accepted a freelance job setting up a database and surveillance system for an illegal Las Vegas brothel. That gig eventually garnered him six felony counts, including aiding and abetting a prostitute, running a house of prostitution, and living off the earnings of a prostitute. The charges were quickly dropped

to a single felony count of pandering. The one good thing that came out of the resulting trial, Lazar says, is that he's not being followed anymore--at least not to his knowledge. "I guess they figured the pandering conviction discredited me," he comments.

Lazar currently earns a living from his two small companies, an independent contracting firm that repairs nuclear devices, and a photo lab. He also builds and races jetcars. And, every year since 1984, on the weekend before July 4, he has staged Desert Blast, which he says is the "the largest illegal fireworks show in the West." This annual pyrotechnic extravaganza features huge fireworks and assorted gas bombs made by Lazar and friends as well as jetcar demonstrations and a little semiautomatic weapons venting. Lazar recently sold his movie rights and is working on a new home video.

Official Response: "The Air Force comment is that there is no comment on anything that goes on at the Nellis Range," says Air Force Master Sgt. J. C. Marcom of Public Affairs. Meanwhile, according to Technical Sergeant Henderson of Public Affairs, "The Air Force has no record that Lazar ever worked at Nellis Air Force Base, though we have compiled an extensive list of inquiries as to his status."

The Critics' Corner: "We've pretty well determined that Lazar did work at Los Alamos, but it's been impossible to verify exactly what he did," says Mark Rodeghier, scientific director of the Center for UFO Studies. "As for element 115, physicists admit that such an element is theoretically possible, but we don't know how to manufacture it or where to get it. So, Lazar's claim to have worked with this element is not necessarily insane, but it's completely unverifiable. Finally, he seems to know enough to have really worked at Area 51 or Dreamland where secret aircraft are tested, but his story remains a murky mystery. The bottom line: It's impossible to verify. So far, we have not found anyone to corroborate the essentials of what Lazar says."

Baffled at Bentwaters

Name: Col. Charles I. Halt, U. S. Air Force, retired

Claim: In late December 1980, while serving as deputy base commander at Bentwaters Air Base in southern England, Halt witnessed and investigated several anomalous objects in the skies over the Rendelsham Forest, which separates the American installation from its twin Royal Air Force base, Woodbridge. The sightings occurred on two separate nights during the week after Christmas. Two weeks later, Halt sent a report about the strange encounters to the British Ministry of Defense.

Background: A career Air Force officer, Halt served in Vietnam and on various bases before arriving at Bentwaters in 1980. He was promoted to base commander in 1984. Halt later served as base commander at Kunsan Air Base, Korea, and as director of the inspections directorate for the Department of Defense inspector general. He retired in 1991. Halt is the first USAF officer since Project Blue Book ended to have filed a memo on unidentified flying objects and gone public with the details.

The Story: "Just after Christmas, about 5:30 a.m., December 26, 1980, I walked into police headquarters and the desk sergeant started to laugh. He said a couple of the guys had been out chasing UFOs. Nothing, however, was in the blotter. I told him to put it in.

"When our base commander came in, we both chuckled. Neither of us believed in UFOs, but we did decide to look into it. Before we had the chance, two nights later, the duty flight commander for the security police unit rushed in to a belated Christmas party white as a sheet. 'The UFO is back,' he said.

"I was asked to investigate. I changed into a utility uniform, then headed out in a jeep to the edge of the forest. About a dozen of our men were already there. Our light-alls (large gas-powered lights) wouldn't work, and there was so much static and constant interference on our radios that

we had to set up a relay. There was increasing commotion. I was determined to show them this was nonsense.

“I took half a dozen of the men and headed into the woods on foot to a clearing where the initial incident had supposedly taken place. We found three distinct indentations in the ground equidistant apart and pressed well into the sandy soil. They were supposedly caused by the object seen two nights before, but I didn't see anything sitting there that night. Neither did anybody else there.

“Inside the triangular area formed by the indentations, one of the men got slightly higher readings on the Geiger counter than he did outside. He photographed the area, and I took a soil sample. Meanwhile, I recorded this activity on my microcassette recorder.

“We knew the Orford Ness lighthouse beacon beamed from the southeast. All of a sudden, directly to the east, we saw an unusual red, sunlike light--oval shaped, glowing, with a black center--10 to 15 feet off the ground, moving through the trees. Beyond the clearing was a barbed-wire fence, farmer's field, house, and barn. The animals were making a lot of noise.

“We ran toward the light up to the fence. It shot over the field and then moved in a 20- to 30-degree horizontal arc. Strangely, it appeared to be dripping what looked like molten steel out of a crucible, as if gravity were somehow pulling it down. Suddenly, it exploded--not a loud bang, just booompf--and broke into five white objects that scattered in the sky. Everything except our radios seemed to return to normal.

“We went to the end of the farmer's property to get a different perspective. In the north, maybe 20 degrees off the horizon, we saw three white objects--elliptical, like a quarter moon but a little larger--with blue, green, and red lights on them, making sharp, angular movements. The objects eventually turned from elliptical to round.

“I called the command post, asked them to call Eastern Radar, responsible for air defense of that sector. Twice they reported that they didn't see anything.

“Suddenly, from the south, a different glowing object moved toward us at a high rate of speed, came within several hundred feet, and then stopped. A pencil-like beam, six to eight inches in diameter, shot from this thing right down by our feet. Seconds later, the object rose and disappeared.

“The objects in the north were still dancing in the sky. After an hour or so, I finally made the call to go in. We left those things out there.

“The film turned out to be fogged; nothing came out. But a staff sergeant later made plaster castings of the indentations, and I had the soil sample.

“Around New Year's Eve, I took statements and interviewed the men who had taken part in the initial incident. The reports were nearly identical.

“Basically, they reported this: In the early morning hours of December 26, one of the airmen drove to the back gate at Woodbridge on a routine security check. He saw lights in the forest, specifically a red light, and thought maybe an airplane had crashed. He radioed a report, which was called into the tower, but the tower reported nobody was flying.

“Eventually, a group headed out to the forest. They reported strange noises--animals, movement, like we heard two nights later.

“As they approached the clearing, they reported seeing a large yellowish-white light with a blinking red light on the upper center portion and a steady blue light emanating from underneath. The tower again reported nothing on radar.

“A few of the men moved to within 20 or 30 feet. Each said the same thing independently--a triangular-shaped metallic object, about nine feet across the base, six feet high, appeared to be

sitting on a tripod. They split up, walked around the craft. One of the men apparently tried to get on the craft, but, they said, it levitated up.

“All three of the guys hit the ground as the craft moved quickly in a zigzagging manner through the woods toward the field, hitting some trees on the way. They got up and approached again, but the object rose up, and then it disappeared at great speed.

“Finally, on January 13, 1981, I wrote a memo to the British Ministry of Defense. Despite my efforts, to my knowledge, no one from any intelligence or government agency ever came on base to investigate.

“I have never sought the limelight, nor have I hidden. I stand to receive no financial benefit from this interview but consented because it's time the truth came out. I don't know what those objects were. I don't know anybody who does. But something as yet unexplained happened out there.”

Update: In 1983, a copy of Halt's memo to the British MOD was released through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Shortly thereafter, a copy of the 18-minute audiotape of the investigation Halt conducted was given to a British UFOlogist by, Halt says, another Air Force officer. Both have made the rounds within the UFO community.

As a result, Halt says he has been “harassed” by UFOlogists and fanatics. While half a dozen men assisted Halt's investigation and dozens of others were near the scene, only a handful of witnesses have come forward. At least one of them, Halt says, is spreading disinformation; consequently, media coverage has been inaccurate at best. For instance, he says, “The stories about holographiclike aliens emerging from their craft are pure fiction.”

Official Response: “The Air Force stopped investigating UFOs in 1969 when Project Blue Book was completed,” says Air Force spokesman Maj. Dave Thurston, based in Washington, DC.

The Critics' Corner: “The UFO you hear described on the audiotape was almost certainly the lighthouse beacon in my opinion, because the peak interval between their descriptions of it getting brighter, then dimmer, is the time of rotation of the beacon, which was about ten miles away,” says UFO skeptic Philip Klass. “Even though they said they saw numerous lights in the night sky, one of every three UFOs reported turns out to be a bright celestial body.”

“Bentwaters is a case of magical thinking--a situation where a bunch of people got excited about different things they correlated in their mind,” says UFO investigator James McGaha, technical consultant to the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal and a retired Air Force pilot, who traveled to England, surveyed the area, and interviewed various people. “Consider these facts: On the night of December 25 to 26, at 9:10 p.m., Russian satellite Cosmos 746 reentered the atmosphere over England and appeared as a bright object. At 2:50 a.m., a fireball entered the atmosphere over Woodbridge. At 4:11 a.m., a British police car with a blue strobe light on top and other lights attached to the undercarriage responded to a telephone report and was driving on the dirt roads through the forest.

“Halt's memo reports that on the second night, they saw two objects in the north, one in the south. On that night, three of the brightest stars were visible--Vega and Deneb in the north, Sirius in the south. And clearly, the strange red light mentioned on the audio tape is the Orford Ness Lighthouse beacon. Beyond that, the morning after the first night, British officers identified the indentations as rabbit diggings. The Geiger counter readings were of background radiation. Nothing appeared on radar that night, either, and no one in either base tower reported anything unusual. Furthermore, no civilians reported seeing or hearing anything.”

Lockheed Martin scientist says there really are aliens and UFOs at Area 51

Open Minds

Alejandro Rojas

October 28, 2014

A senior scientist at Lockheed Martin says there are aliens and UFOs at Area 51, and he has the pictures to prove it. However, serious doubt has been cast on the alleged alien in pictures. Boyd Bushman worked as an engineer for over forty years, and before retirement, worked as a senior scientist for Lockheed Martin. Over the years he has done several interviews about his interest in antigravity technology, and has increasingly alluded to having secret knowledge about UFOs. His latest interview (seen above) was purportedly conducted just before his death on August 7, 2014. It was posted on YouTube on October 8.

I have been following Bushman for several years, my curiosity about Bushman was piqued in 1999 when he appeared on a Discovery Channel documentary about secret aircraft technology hosted by Nick Cook, author and writer for Jane's Defence. My interest increased when I received an alleged polygraph test taken by Bushman in which he admitted to having worked with alien technology at Area 51.

Cook's documentary was titled *Billion Dollar Secret*, and was an investigation of black projects. Towards the end he speculates about antigravity, but said he could not find any defense companies claiming to be working on it. However, there was one engineer willing to talk to him about antigravity technology. That was Bushman. In the documentary, Cook says of Bushman: "In the quest for breakthroughs in aircraft propulsion, it was Bushman's job to look beyond the frontiers of what is known and understood."

Bushman is vague in the interview. Cook speculated, "I felt he was trying to tell me something he was not supposed to talk about."

Eventually, Bushman talks about his personal interest in antigravity, and in particular the work of Canadian researcher John Hutchison. He even showed Cook video of what he believed to be antigravity technology at work.

Cook said, "I was astounded that someone of Bushman's standing should seriously discuss the notion of antigravity with me."

I found the documentary fascinating. I never forgot Bushman's comments, but I heard nothing more about him for several years. Then, in 2007, he showed up in a somewhat obscure documentary by David Sereda titled *From Here to Andromeda*. In it, Bushman discusses more of his ideas about UFOs and antigravity.

Bushman talks about his antigravity experiments and he refers to Bob Lazar, the original Area 51 whistleblower who claims to have worked on a project back engineering alien spacecraft.

Bushman says he received Lazar's tapes from the "white world," so he can share them. He doesn't go into any more detail.

Lazar's interviews, and a video he made outlining the technology he worked on, can be found on YouTube. So Bushman does not allude to having any inside information. He also says many UFOs were actually high tech secret aircraft. However, towards the end of the interview he claims to know a jet fighter pilot that claims to have been the person who shot down the Roswell spacecraft. He says this person saw the dead aliens and walked into the spaceship.

In early 2008, Bushman's name came up in conversation with a UFO researcher I was working with. She said she knew him and that he had recently taken a polygraph test in which he admitted to have worked with antigravity at Area 51, had worked on alien technologies, had examined an alien spacecraft, and had even touched an alien life form. He also said he knew Lazar.

She forwarded me an email she had received from Bushman with the polygraph results, and said it was OK for me to contact him and ask if I could share it. I sent him an email, explaining that I had seen his interviews and that I had received a copy of his polygraph test. I explained that I was working with MUFON, at the time, and that I would like to work with him to present more of this information in a manner he found suitable. His response was, "WHEN AND CONSULTING FEE?"

I replied that I was planning on sharing the interview via YouTube for free, but if he let me know what he needed I could see if I could work it out. There was no response. I then emailed him the polygraph test, and asked if it was real. I figured if nothing else, he could hopefully verify that. Again, there was no response.

Since I had not received permission, nor had I verified whether or not it was real, I never posted the polygraph test. I had sent it to researchers I trusted for their opinions, and asked them not to share it until I received permission. Although we have discussed it periodically over the years, none of us have shared it yet. However, now that he has passed, and he has done this new interview, I will post the polygraph at the end of this story in its entirety.

I believe the person who sent me the polygraph test to be a trust worthy person. I believe she really did receive it from Bushman. Whether or not it is real, I cannot say. The claims in the polygraph test are startling. However, as Bushman revealed more information over the years, the information did not remain consistent.

That brings us to the most recent video (seen at the top of the story). In this new video, which is being called his last, his story is a bit different than what is in the polygraph test. In the video, he does not claim to have direct contact with the alleged alien related projects, but instead he says he is working with a team at Area 51.

Bushman says he is in "contact directly or indirectly with Teller and his group running Area 51 and the equivalent." Another vague statement which does not admit to being in direct contact, and it also suggests that some of this alleged work is in a facility "equivalent" to Area 51.

Either way, Bushman presents UFO photos he has received, some of which are ships that are purportedly very near the photographer, but are difficult to make out. He shows a picture of an out of focus light that he says is what the craft look like when they “power up.”

Bushman says, “I asked them to tell me about who is flying these things, and they said ‘Fine.’” He then presents a series of photographs of an alleged alien being. It looks like what one would expect an alien to look like, with a big head and big eyes. He says they have five fingers, five toes, two eyes, and webbed feet.

He explained, “They are approximately five feet, four and a half to five feet tall. They had one or two of them that were around that were 230 years old. And we have a total of at least 18 that exist and operate in our facility as Teller set it up.”

However, there is a problem with the pictures that was actually identified years ago. These pictures were first posted by Hutchison, the antigravity researcher in Canada that Bushman referred to in the Cook interview. Hutchinson posted them in 2008 and says he received them anonymously by a man he believed to be in the CIA.

Quickly, several people identified the images as looking like an alien doll that was sold at Kmart. Many of these people have posted their pictures online. It does look like the same alien. At least a couple people have suggested that perhaps the government made a doll to sell in Kmart that looked exactly like the real alien in order to shed doubt. A bit of a stretch. Others still insist that although the doll looks very similar, it is not exact, and so the alien in the picture may still be real. Take a look and see what you think.

The other problem is that these pictures supposedly came from Bushman’s insiders, but they actually came from Hutchison. Hutchison is by no means an insider, and the alien in the pictures actually turning out to be a doll sold at Kmart further emphasizes that point. Bushman goes on to reveal more information about the aliens. He says there are two groups. One he likens to cattle wrestlers, and the other cattle rustlers. The prior are good and get along with humans, the later not so much.

He even shows a picture of what he believes to be an alien ghost. Supposedly one of the aliens died, and the man who told him this story took a picture of himself in which the alien spirit appeared.

Bushman goes on to tell the story of his friend who shot down an alien craft and stepped inside, but he says more often than not, working with alien technology is dangerous for humans. Bushman says 39 people have lost their lives trying to reverse engineer UFOs. 19 of those was during a test of the technology a year and a half ago. Although, he is a little bit vague about the details. He says, “They wanted to bring various flying craft near the UFO, and the UFO defended itself. And 19 of our people died.”

Like so many stories in the UFO field, Bushman's is enigmatic. The whole affair could easily be written off as the delusional ramblings of an old man. The only thing that causes one to pause is Bushman's background. Why would a high level scientist begin making up such wild stories? Did he actually work with Teller, and did he ever really go to Area 51? Or were these all tall tales told to him that he believed wholeheartedly? Now that Bushman has passed we may never know.

The Polygraph Transcript...

Question 1: Did you ever work for Strategic Defense Initiative?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Result: True

Question 2: Did you work longer than 2 years for SDI?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Result: True

Question 3: Do you have in personal property any blueprints of Brilliant Pebbles Project?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Result: True

Question 4: Did you personally design any parts of Brilliant Pebbles?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Result: True

Question 5: Was Victor Moore of SDI killed instead of drug overdose reported to public?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Result: True

Question 6: Was Russell Smith of SDI killed instead of cliff suicide reported to public?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Result: True

Question 7: Did you ever work for Edward Teller?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Result: True

Question 8: Were you personally hired by Edward Teller?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Result: True

Question 9: Did or do you work at Area 51?

Answer: Yes
Polygraph Result: True

Question 10: Did or do you work at Area 51 as research scientist?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Result: True

Question 11: Did or do you work at S-4 complex?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Result: True

Question 12: Were you research scientist in S-4 complex?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Result: True

Question 13: Did you know Bob Lazar inside S-4?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Result: True

Question 14: Is Bob Lazar information on alien spacecraft correct?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 15: Was our job to blueprint alien energy systems?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 16: Did you relay any information to anyone other than Edward Teller?
Answer: No
Polygraph Result: True

Question 17: Do alien life forms exist?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 18: Have you ever photographed personally alien life forms?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 19: Have you ever been threatened with death for discussing Area 51 or S-4?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 20: Have you been threatened within 30 days of December 2, 2007?

Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 21: Have you been discredited by security personal to keep you from talking to public?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 22: Do you have PhD?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Result: True

Question 23: Is your working at a family electronics business a cover for alien technology research you are currently working on?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 24: Do you trust the United States government to have access to this technology?
Answer: No
Polygraph Results: True

Question 25: Do you trust United States law enforcement or Justice department?
Answer: No
Polygraph Results: True

Question 26: Have you ever discussed this technology with scientist from other countries?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 27: Have you ever touched alien life form?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 28: Does any member of your family have any glue to what you do?
Answer: No
Polygraph Results: True

Question 29: Is there more than eight alien spacecraft that you have personally examined?
Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 30: Are you a alien?
Answer: No
Polygraph Results: True

Question 31: Are you a antigravity scientist?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 32: Do you have antigravity room?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 33: Do you use a lenses assembly to generate antigravity energy?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 34: Have you personally floated around?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 35: Has other personal floated in antigravity room?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 36: Do you trust United States government with your antigravity technology?

Answer: No

Polygraph Result: True

Question 37: Is your antigravity lenses assembly a direct result of your alien technology research?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 38: Do you feel that your past attempts to go public with release of alien technology was waste of time?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 39: Are you willing to discuss this technology public ally again?

Answer: No

Polygraph Result: Inconclusive

Question 40: Do you fear more threats?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 41: Were you informed by security personal that over 100,000 dollars has been spent to discredit you?

Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 42: Were you informed by security personal that they personally have paid off media and internet personalities to discredit you?

Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 43: Do you know what personalities are they?

Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 44: Would you discuss your job or research with the President of the United States?

Answer: No
Polygraph Results: True

Question 45: Would you discuss your job or research with a Congressional committee?

Answer: No
Polygraph Results: True

Question 46: Is it due to corrupt actions of federal law enforcement agents and personal that will not allow you to discuss your job or research with Washington D.C.

Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 47: If Washington D.C. corrected issues of the corrupt federal law enforcement agents would you reconsider discussing your job or research with Washington D.C. ?

Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 48: Is mankind truly ready for the information that you could release?

Answer: No
Polygraph Results: True

Question 49: Would you use your antigravity room to assist in medical analysis of issues dealing with astronauts?

Answer: No
Polygraph Results: True

Question 50: Is it true that you can create a somewhat mental freeze state in the antigravity room?

Answer: Yes
Polygraph Results: True

Question 51: Can you generate a antigravity beam?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 52: Have you ever lifted anything over 1000 pounds over a height of 100 feet?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 53: Do you have technology that could neutralize IED/UXO explosive devices?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 54: Would you share this technology with the United States government?

Answer: No

Polygraph Results: True

Question 55: Is it because of the same corrupt federal law enforcement practices for why you will share this technology?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 56: Again if Washington D.C. corrected the corruption would you reconsider sharing the technology with government?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 57: Is your mistrust of the federal law enforcement based on facts and cases that effect you personally?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 58: Are there other law enforcement agencies at lower levels that effect your position?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 59: If Washington D.C. failed to correct the corrupt law enforcement actions, but knowing that your IED/UXO explosive neutralizer could save a life would you still hold back on this technology?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 60: Are you aware that you are being monitored and tracked by security personal?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 61: Are other agencies tracking you too?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 62: When the northeast region of the United States lost the mass power outage, is it true that you personally notified a federal government official days before it happened and they disregarded stating it could not happen?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 63: Was it the power grid failure that was disclosed to the public?

Answer; No

Polygraph Results: True

Question 64: Have you personally worked at Langley?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 65: Would you disclose what occurred while at Langley?

Answer: No

Polygraph Results: True

Question 66: Do you still maintain a security higher that top secret?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 67: When you back and forth from location do you ever travel via public transportation or airlines?

Answer: No

Polygraph Results: True

Question 68: Is the plane you travel on a private jet?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

Question 69: Is the airplane tied to government or military?

Answer: No

Polygraph Results: True

Question 70: Are there locations in central or east coast regions of the United States where alien technology research is being done that you have personally visited?

Answer: Yes

Polygraph Results: True

BILL NYE THE SCIENCE GUY SAYS WE CAN FIND ALIEN LIFE WITHIN 20 YEARS, BUT WE'RE LOOKING IN THE WRONG PLACE

TECHLY

POIEE

SEPTEMBER 1, 2014

Bill Nye the Science Guy believes we'll find extraterrestrial life within the next 20 years, all for the cost of "barely [a] cup of coffee per taxpayer". While Mars is the neighbor we most often scour for ET, Nye says we should be searching Jupiter's moon of Europa.

Liquid water is generally agreed to be one of the most important building blocks of life, and Europa has twice the Earth's volume of seawater, making it the most likely place in our solar system we'll find alien life.

Nye and NASA are attempting to convince US Government to fund an exploratory mission to Europa. The estimated costs are \$US2 billion over 10 years, or the price of a cup of coffee per US taxpayer.

"The chemicals that make up life are mixed in the seawater [of Europa]," Nye tells *Big Think*. "Let's say if we could launch, we could get in the orbit of Jupiter and Europa by 2022, you'd get results back by 2025 and then things don't happen as fast as you think they would so add ten years. Yeah, so 20 years, 20 years from 2014, that's possible.

As the CEO of the Planetary Society, a non-profit organization in the United States, Bill Nye wants us all to play a part in the future of space exploration.

"It would be extraordinary if there are living things there," Nye says of Europa. "It would be a great. It would be a worthy thing. We may discover life..."

"It would be the work of all of us... All of us taxpayers and citizens of the Earth who participate... Everybody would be involved. And if we were to find evidence of life, it would change the world."

Discussion Questions

1. Many conspiracy theorists believe that the U.S. Government is aware of the existence of extraterrestrial life. If this is true, should this information be confirmed to the public or kept top-secret?
2. Do you believe space exploration is necessary? Why or why not?
3. What do you think the U.S. Government's agenda of space exploration is? Is it to search for other life or to possibly one day colonize other planets?
4. What do you make of the polygraph results of Bushman in "Lockheed Martian scientist says there really are aliens and UFOs at Area 51"?
5. Why do you think Area 51 is associated with UFOs?
6. NASA suggests that where there is water there is life. Are they hinting that they believe Aliens exist? What do you think they mean by that?
7. "Unlike in many other nations, there is very little stigma surrounding UFO research in China, where it is an accepted and recognized science taken very seriously by academics. The government allows a print UFO journal to be published regularly; it has an estimated circulation of 400,000 and many ex-government personnel are said to be vociferous believers" (Saunders, p. 31). Do you agree with this statement? Do you have any comparisons or differences between the U.S. and China and the stigma regarding UFO research?
8. In the future, do you envision countries going to war over space? Perhaps claiming planets to colonize? Why or why not?
9. If there is life on other planets, such as Mars, which NASA is hinting at. Do you think they are human-like or stereotypical aliens? What do you think we'll find as we explore more and more?