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Rumors persist of aliens kept on ice at Ohio

"There are not now, nor ever have been, any extraterrestrial visitors or equipment on Wright-Patterson Air Force Base."

— Air Force press release, July 1980.

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WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — Like the plot of the movie it apparently inspired, the rumor of Wright-Patterson's aliens on ice is far-fetched enough to make it almost believable.

And, based on the number of letters that keep flowing in here every month demanding that the Air Force come clean about its extraterrestrial

cover-up, more than a few people believe every word of it.

The rumor is that in 1947 a saucer-shaped spaceship, manned by aliens, crashed in an isolated area of New Mexico. The alien crew and their craft, the rumor says, were then taken to Wright-Patterson, where they were deep frozen for safekeeping.

Earlier this year, a movie called "Hangar 18" was released bearing strong similarities to the "little green men" rumor, and the information office here is bracing for another onslaught of calls.

Although Wright-Patterson doesn't even have a Hangar 18, its association with UFOs over the years is

enough to make even the hardened skeptic wonder about the reports for at least a few minutes.

From 1947 through 1969, Wright-Patterson was the home of "Operation Blue Book," an official Air Force investigation of unidentified flying objects. When Blue Book was discontinued in 1969 it had investigated 12,618 sightings, of which 701 remained unidentified to the end.

When it was all over, the Air Force concluded that none of the investigated sightings gave any indication of being a threat to the national security, that none represented technological developments beyond the range of present-day scientific knowledge, and that there was no

evidence that sightings categorized as "unidentified" were extraterrestrial vehicles.

Since 1969, the Air Force says, nothing has happened to persuade it to resume its investigation.

But, despite the official reports and the press releases, Wright-Patterson still gets a steady flow of letters from people all over the world wanting to know the truth about "the cover-up of the three humanoids you found in the New Mexico desert," says Lt. Col. Leonard M. Kacher, base public affairs officer.

Kacher gets so many letters that he now has adopted a standard reply, but admits that "not everyone appreciates the form letter."

One woman wrote back, "I did not ask for a sheet with a bunch of mar-larkey. I just don't see the sense of hiding this stuff . . ."

When two UFO investigators collaborated on a book about Wright-Patterson's cover-up last year, they identified the location of the frozen aliens as Hangar 18-A. While the base doesn't have a hangar numbered that high, there is an office building with the 18-A tag.

But a more likely location for putting Martians on ice, says the Air Force, is Building 18-F. Used during the 1950s by the Aero Propulsion Laboratory for testing engines, the building has several refrigerated cells capable of bringing tempera-

air base

tures down to 65 degrees below zero. The cells are not only large enough for a flying saucer, but at one time accommodated a complete fire engine.

But Air Force officials point out that the building has never been off limits, and that reporters have toured it at least three times in the past year without finding any aliens.

Don Ritter, who worked on tests in 18-F during the '50s and has been at Wright-Patterson since 1942, says the rumors of aliens on ice have gone on for years. "I'd like to see one of those UFOs," he says.

Kacher himself doesn't dismiss the possibility of creatures from outer space, despite Blue Book's conclusions. "It seems to me to be awful egotistical to say that we would be the only intelligent beings in this galaxy," he says.

But, he adds, if they're out there, they haven't identified themselves. "I want proof and we haven't seen that," he says.

He also says he seriously doubts the Air Force is capable of covering up the existence of alien beings for 34 years. "It would probably be the best-kept secret we've ever had in this country."

Meanwhile, the closest the Air Force comes to documenting the existence of UFOs at Wright-Patterson is a small display case in an out-of-the-way hall at the Air Force Museum. There it gives its official response to the reports of UFOs and shows some of the paraphernalia investigated by Blue Book — including a chunk of plastic and a broken brake drum from a Mack truck.