

UFO buffs seek data of agency

WASHINGTON (UPI) — An organization of UFO buffs is seeking a close encounter with the Supreme Court in a battle over 135 UFO-related documents held by the super-secret National Security Agency.

A New York City-based group called Citizens Against UFO Secrecy wants the justices to order the agency to release the mysterious material under the Freedom of Information Act.

The case began in late 1978 when the UFO group filed a formal request for 18 agency documents under the information law. The National Security Agency flatly refused to release the information, claiming it is exempt from disclosure under the law.

A few months later, the group expanded its request to include "all documents in the possession or under the control of the National Security Agency relating to or pertaining to Unidentified Flying Objects and the UFO phenomena."

In response, the agency admitted it has 135 such "UFO-related" documents, but again declined to release them. It claimed such disclosure would reveal some of its top secret electronic monitoring and interception techniques.

The agency is a Defense Department unit headquartered at Fort Meade, Md. One of its main responsibilities is to gather foreign intelligence information by intercepting radio communications sent to or from foreign governments.

The agency told the UFO buffs, "NSA must focus its interception activities on those particular communications lines, channels, links or systems which yield the highest proportion of useful foreign intelligence information.

"What foreign governments do not know is which of the vast number of radio communications NSA attempts to intercept, which are intercepted, and, of those that are intercepted, which yield to NSA processing methods and techniques," NSA Policy Chief Eugene Yeates said in a letter to the UFO group.

"It is the protection of this critical information that is at the heart of the instant case," he added.

That refusal prompted the organization to file suit in federal District Court in Washington.

The agency, urging the court to throw out the case, filed one public affidavit and one confidential affidavit that was reviewed in private by Judge Gerhard Gesell.

The judge dismissed the case in 1980, declaring, "release of this material could seriously jeopardize the work of the agency and the security of the United States."

The UFO group then took the dispute to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, but that panel affirmed Gesell's decision.

Appealing to the Supreme Court, the UFO buffs argued, "The district court accepted without question NSA's overbroad claim of exemption" from the information act.

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Examiner

U.S. can withhold UFO files, high court decides

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court today refused to order the super-secret National Security Agency to disclose whatever it knows about Unidentified Flying Objects.

The court, without comment, let stand a ruling that the agency's files on the subject do not have to be made public under the Freedom of Information Act.

A group calling itself Citizens Against UFO Secrecy in 1979 sought all NSA documents relating to UFOs.

The executive-branch agency released some information but withheld other data.

In November, the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington upheld a trial judge's ruling that the disputed information must remain secret. All but one of the requested documents were classified.

Before denying the group's request, U.S. District Judge Gerhard Gesell examined some of the information behind closed doors.

Gesell concluded that whatever UFO-related data he saw "clearly relates to the most sensitive activities" of the NSA. He said release of the material could harm the agency's work and national security.

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