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Anchorage Daily News

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Veteran UFO watcher setting up own shop

JAMES E. WALTERS
The Associated Press

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PHOENIX, Ariz. — An expert on unidentified flying objects is moving his research headquarters to Phoenix, where he hopes to shift the study of UFOs "from the crackpot era to respectable science."

Astronomer J. Allen Hynek, who spent 20 years working with the Air Force on UFO research and heads the Center for UFO Studies, plans to spend \$2 million a year studying the best reported sightings of the mysterious objects.

With the backing of a sponsor he declined to identify, the former Northwestern University astronomy department chairman and director of the Lunar Surveillance Project — part of the Apollo program — said he will move the center's research operations from the Chicago suburb of Evanston, Ill. Its publicity operations will remain in Evanston.

Blurb

Hynek, 74, said he chose Arizona because it is a center for astronomical research, has a burgeoning high-technology

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UFO expert moves research

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industry and "people in general have a more open attitude. They seem to be much more willing to explore possibilities."

"I think the time is ripe for massive research into the UFO phenomenon," said Hynek, whose book "The UFO Experience" was the basis for the movie "Close Encounters of the Third Kind."

"The job has to be taken from the crackpot era to respectable science," he said in an interview last week.

"I don't know that the solution will come within the next century, but a start must be made in making the subject respectable," he said.

Hynek, who also is a former associate director of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, said that part of the problem in explaining UFOs is that to arrive here

from the nearest star is beyond the capabilities of Earth's current technology.

"I think we're much in the position George Washington would have been if a helicopter had hovered over Valley Forge, landed and two men got out and began talking to other helicopters overhead," he said. "No one today would question the technology of helicopters and walkie-talkies. But how could Washington have comprehended them?"

He suggested that UFO sightings are part of a conditioning process by some beings "smart enough to realize they didn't want to scare ... us."

"I think someday that what we now regard as UFOs will be as common as TV is today. I'm not saying they're flesh and blood. They do know something we don't," he said.