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U.S. government covers up UFO sightings, researcher says

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The federal government is keeping secret its documented cases of UFO sightings, a researcher on the subject said Wednesday.

Robert Hastings, who has spoken on UFOs at more than 100 college campuses since 1981 and who is writing a book on UFO sightings, said the secrecy is being "orchestrated" by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Hastings said researchers have collected information from interviews with retired military personnel and declassified documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act showing that government officials take UFO reports seriously.

"What this information indicates beyond a reasonable doubt is that UFOs exist, they are neither Russian nor American and that there is a high level cover-up by government officials," he told a group of students, retired military veterans and senior citizens assembled at the McLennan Community College Lecture Hall.

According to the April 18, 1977, "Washington Whispers" column in *U.S. News & World Report*, before the year is out the government or perhaps the president was expected to make "unsettling disclo-

tures" about UFOs which would be a reversal of official policy that in the past has downgraded UFO incidents.

Such a revelation was never made, however, Hastings said.

Hastings, an independent UFO researcher, said his interest in UFOs began in 1967. The son of an Air Force officer, he was at an air traffic control tower at Malstrom Air Force Base in Montana, when he had his first experience with UFOs.

"Five UFOs were tracked on military radar, and for a half-hour period, they hovered over nearby ICBM missile silos, violating sensitive air space," he said. "They flew off at an estimated speed of 4,800 miles an hour, far beyond the capability of any known man-made aircraft."

He said the military personnel were "extremely anxious" during the incident.

Since then, Hastings has found reports of sightings over civilian power plants, military missile bases, nuclear weapons storage facilities and other sensitive military and governmental areas — including the White House in July 1952, according to a news report of that year. Several declassified government documents tell of sightings at Los Alamos, N.M., where nu-

clear weapons are stored, he said.

News reports of the 1965 electrical blackout involving nine New England states reported a UFO was sighted over a Syracuse, N.Y., power plant just before the biggest power shortage in history.

In the Southern hemisphere, an Australian television crew filmed a UFO flying close to their plane on a course over New Zealand, the first known film of such a phenomenon.

During his presentation, Hastings showed slides of documents obtained through lawsuits filed by activist groups using the Freedom of Information Act. On Jan. 14, 1979, according to a *New York Times* report, a federal judge ordered the CIA to release documents related to UFOs to a group called Ground Saucer Watch.

The released CIA documents revealed that UFO-related information has been directed to such federal agencies as the CIA and the National Security Agency, a group so secret that "even its charter is classified," Hastings said.

"Government interest in UFOs goes far beyond and much higher than the public has been led to believe," Hastings said.