

New Philadelphia (OH) Times-Reporter 9 Aug 88

# Inhuman searches

Tim Ashbaugh

## Are Earthlings not alone? Discoveries say maybe not

BALTIMORE (AP) — Astronomers searching for radio signals from intelligent life beyond the Earth say circumstantial evidence is growing that humankind is not alone in the universe.

Reports of the discovery of new planets and of the presence of complex organic chemicals on comets are "encouraging" Michael J. Klein, manager of NASA's radio search for life, said Monday.

Research announced at the International Astronomical Union's 20th assembly last week showed the discovery of at least 10 planet-like objects in orbit of distant stars. Other studies showed that comets and

cosmic dust particles contain the complex organic compounds that are thought to have been the chemical precursors of life.

"That is the circumstantial evidence that life exists elsewhere," Klein said. "We know now that the materials are there. It gives us a good feeling that we are on the right track."

Klein heads a project called the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, or SETI, that is planning to mount an intensified search for radio signals from civilizations that may exist on planets orbiting distant stars.

Programs run by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration,

Harvard University and others have listened for intelligence-directed radio signals for more than 20 years, but only a small fraction of the vast universe and the many radio frequencies that must be monitored actually have been checked.

The Jet Propulsion Laboratory, which is operated by the California Institute of Technology for NASA, has proposed expanding the effort with sophisticated new equipment that would listen to tens of millions of channels at the same time. The equipment would be monitored by a computer capable of identifying signals that could be sent by intelligent life.

TEP 8.9.88 Tim Ashbaugh