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N.M. congressman spurs probe of UFO reports

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Where television's *Unsolved Mysteries* has tried and failed, the General Accounting Office is unafraid to venture.

At the request of Rep. Steven Schiff, R-N.M., Congress' investigative branch has launched a study to determine whether the government covered up a story alleging that the bodies of alien space voyagers were removed from a crashed flying saucer found near Roswell, N.M., in 1947.

After the purported crash of the spacecraft, the bodies of the extraterrestrial visitors were said by a local undertaker and other conspiracy theorists to have been autopsied and then secretly flown to an Air Force base in Ohio.

Even though the "Roswell Incident" has been dismissed repeatedly by the Defense Department as nothing more than UFO fantasizing triggered by the discovery of a downed weather balloon, the GAO has begun searching for documents to prove allegations that the Air Force "suppressed" information sought by Schiff.

Schiff is a member of the House Govern-

ment Operations Committee, which oversees the GAO.

GAO spokeswoman Laura A. Kopelson said the office's investigation, first reported in the *Albuquerque Journal* on Thursday, stemmed from a meeting in October between Schiff and GAO Controller General Charles A. Bowsher. Schiff complained then that the Defense Department had been "unresponsive" to his inquiries about the 1947 incident.

Kopelson said "as far as I know only one investigator had been assigned" to the case so far, and that not enough work had been done to report any results back to Schiff. At another point, Kopelson said "the people doing it are either on sick leave or are unavailable."

She said there was no way of estimating how much the investigation would cost, and the GAO does not release such information anyway.

Kopelson said Schiff had asked the GAO "to see if there is any evidence that information regarding UFOs had been suppressed" following the Roswell incident.

Schiff, however, said that at a routine October meeting he had merely complained about the Defense Department's lack of responsiveness but a GAO official said, "We're will-

ing to take a stab at it."

Schiff, in a telephone interview from Albuquerque, said that last March, after receiving inquiries from "UFO believers" and some Roswell residents who were in the military in 1947, he wrote to Defense Secretary Les Aspin asking for more information.

Schiff said that after calling Aspin last March to request a Defense Department briefing on the Roswell incident, he received a call from an Air Force lieutenant colonel, who brusquely told him the documents had been turned over to the National Archives.

However, Schiff said, Archives officials told him they did not have the records on Roswell, even though they did have records of "Project Blue Book," a 1969 Air Force study of reported UFO sightings. That study, Schiff said, did not deal with the Roswell case.

"I was getting pretty upset at all the running around," Schiff said, adding that at his meeting with GAO officials, "they made an offer to help."

"Generally, I'm a skeptic on UFOs and alien beings, but there are indications from the runaround that I got that whatever it was, it wasn't a balloon. Apparently, it's another government coverup," Schiff said.

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Albuquerque Journal

Letters Lead to UFO Inquiry

Schiff Denies Prompt From Aide's Spouse

By Steve Brewer

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Rep. Steve Schiff says his investigation into the 1947 recovery of a mysterious object in New Mexico was prompted by letters from constituents, not by his aide's UFO-hunting husband.

Placitas resident Karl Pflock, who's married to Schiff's district director, Mary Martinek, has worked vigorously for nearly a year investigating the so-called "Roswell Incident" under a grant from the Fund for UFO Research in Washington, D.C.

Last fall, Schiff asked the General Accounting Office, which he helps oversee from his position on a House committee, to investigate allegations the military pulled off some sort of cover-up after crash debris was recovered on a ranch near Corona in the summer of '47. The investigation is under way.

Pflock said Thursday he didn't prod Schiff into seeking the GAO probe.

"This is his baby," Pflock said. "He's not doing me any favors. He's doing it because he's committed to the idea that this is something that should be brought out in public."

Pflock said he's talked to Schiff in "strictly casual conversations" two or three times about his interest in the case. Schiff said he didn't recall those conversations, and that his interest was sparked by a "flurry" of letters from constituents.

What matters, he said, isn't why the inquiry began, but how the Department of Defense "stonewalled" when he asked for information.

The Pentagon told Schiff it no longer had the records on whatever was recovered from the ranch and steered him to the National Archives.

Archives officials, however, said, "We have not located any documents related to this event in the (Air Force's) Project Blue Book records, or in any other pertinent Defense Department records in our custody."

The Roswell Incident has been the source of debate and research among UFO buffs for decades. Many think the incident is the best case for alien contact with Earth, despite the military's statements at the time that the debris was from a weather balloon.

Schiff said Thursday he doesn't believe a UFO was recovered at the ranch.

"I think, first of all, it could be a weather balloon," he said. "But because of the government's obvious disinterest in giving me the information, that leads me to think it might've been something else."

Like what?

"If I had to guess, I would say some kind of military experiment," he said. "But that's sheerly a guess."

Pflock, too, said he isn't convinced an alien space-

craft was recovered by the military, but "something extraordinary was recovered."

Pflock said he and other UFO researchers first made formal contact with Schiff's staff about the incident in August 1992.

Pflock and fellow researcher Fred Whiting subsequently compiled a 130-page "briefing paper" filled with news accounts, military documents and testimony from witnesses, much of which points toward some sort of government plot to hide whatever really happened in 1947. That paper was given to Schiff's office in December, Pflock said, and "they're going to be giving that to the GAO, if they haven't already done that, to help in the investigation."

Schiff began his search for information in March 1993, when he and Martinek wrote a letter to Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, seeking a "definitive explanation of what transpired and why."

In the three-page letter, they said records and witness testimony make it appear that "the balloon explanation was a cover story" and that "federal authorities sought to intimidate witnesses and their families into silence."

The letter said Martinek, then Schiff's legislative director, would "coordinate all activities concerning this request."

After a series of letters resulted in one dead-end after another, Schiff took his quest to the GAO. Schiff said he hasn't gotten any answers yet from the GAO, but when he does, he'll make them public.

OPINION

The Albuquerque Tribune

EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR: JACK EHN 823-3616

EDITORIALS

Bouquets and brickbats

Open up on UFOs, feds

Now this is what we call seeing the BIG picture.

Rep. Steve Schiff, R-N.M., has persuaded the General Accounting Office to reopen the case of the "Roswell Incident." That's the world-famous crash of a mysterious object 75 miles northwest of Roswell in 1947. UFO buffs speculate that it was a flying saucer and that the Air Force spirited away the debris — including bodies of alien crew members. They complain the government has kept details secret ever since.

It's not that Schiff believes in UFOs. He's concerned that the government is hiding something the public has a right to know about. Tell the truth, he says, and lay the matter to rest.

Was it a government experiment gone wrong? Aliens? An errant milk truck? In any case, let the people know, and let them judge the significance of this long-ago event. To continue to withhold information is abusive, setting the government over and against the people it serves.

Schiff says the GAO reports "getting stonewalled" by the Department of Defense. That's no surprise to readers following The Trib's coverage of the infamous "plutonium experiment," a similar abuse of government secrecy.

We hope Schiff keeps after it. The nation — maybe the universe — will be grateful.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Support Schiff in his UFO hunt

While some may criticize Congressman Steve Schiff for wasting money in his quest for a General Accounting Office investigation of the 1947 UFO crash near Corona, I feel that his action is to be commended.

Too much credible testimony from firsthand eyewitnesses has accumulated to dismiss the incident as the crash of a mere weather balloon, and it is long past time that the truth of this exceedingly enigmatic incident is disclosed.

Schiff must be supported unconditionally by the media and the people of New Mexico in his quest for the long-suppressed truth.

CHARLES BATES

Albuquerque

OFF THE AIR

Ghosts, UFOs— only in New Mexico



T.J. TROUT

This was a week that made you doubt your sanity and the sanity of humanity in general. But it also made you happy to live in New Mexico, because there's nowhere else on Earth where this stuff happens.

First, let us talk of Santa Fe, the city that proves if you take red or green chile above 7,000 feet it turns into a strong hallucinogen. There is a ghost running for mayor of Santa Fe. A dead person. A dead artist being "channelled" by Gail Bochenek.

She met the ghost of Tommy Macclone outside of a gallery on a dark night, and he told her he wants to run for mayor, as he had in the past. So now Bochenek is on the ballot in Tommy's place because they won't let a dead person run for public office.

So she is running, but will channel Tommy, and he'll be the real mayor and make all the decisions. Oooh, boy. I say elect them both. Think of all the publicity Santa Fe will get from Oprah and Geraldo.

Secondly, Rep. Steve Schiff has

called for reopening the "Roswell" file, where supposedly in 1947 a flying saucer, or a weather balloon, or the Hindenberg, or a giant Spam container, crashed near Corona.

It was originally reported in the paper as a crashed flying saucer, with rumors of dead alien bodies being shipped back east to Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. However, that story was immediately squelched and replaced by the official government explanation of a crashed weather balloon.

Because of calls from his constituency, Schiff wants to get to the bottom of all this.

But even he is hitting a stone wall. The powers that be told him all the documents are missing. How unexpected. Over the years, documents on the Roswell Incident have been released, but lots with only six or seven words remaining on the pages, the rest having large black lines drawn through the pertinent stuff. Now that's what I call freedom of information.

I admire Schiff for two reasons. He wants to get to the bottom of an obvious government cover-up and he is willing to risk his credibility on a subject that is, at the very least,

outrageous, and at the most could put him in the front row of Mystery Science Theater — even though he speculates that what crashed in 1947 was not a flying saucer but probably some secret contraption the government was working on.

I like to think of myself as an open-minded, rational person. But just for fun, let's speculate that what actually happened was the crash of an alien craft, that bodies were recovered and shipped off to Ohio. Now what would happen if the government did release the information? Widespread panic? Everybody armed to the teeth, fearful to go out at night? Near anarchy? Boy, you know, that sounds exactly like what we have now — and no aliens!

On the other hand, maybe the knowledge that we are not alone would change our way of thinking for the better. Instead of thinking Black or White, Arab or Jew, Croat or Serb, we'd all be Earthlings, and we could begin to start solving our problems globally instead of fighting among ourselves.

Trout is morning-show host for KZRR-FM 84 Rock radio. His show airs from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. weekdays. His column runs every other Friday.

Schiff asks new investigation of famous '47 UFO incident

By **MEREDITH HOGAN**

Staff reporter

A well-known New Mexico UFO case, known as the "Roswell Incident," is being re-opened at the request of Republican U.S. Rep. Steve Schiff.

Schiff asked the General Accounting Office to investigate whether a government cover-up followed the crash of a mysterious object near the ranch town of Corona, about 75 miles northwest of Roswell, on July 2, 1947.

Schiff said he decided to look into the allega-

tions after receiving letters from people interested in UFOs and at least 2 letters from people who said they were part of the Air Force team that cleaned up debris from the supposed UFO incident.

The letters from members of the Air Force cleanup described high security measures and orders to keep quiet about the situation.

Schiff says the matter is not about whether a UFO was sighted.

"The issue is another aspect of government cover-up. If the government would just say what they did, there wouldn't be a problem," Schiff said.

OPINION

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