

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 4, 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JACK GIBBONS 

SUBJECT: INQUIRY FROM LAURANCE ROCKEFELLER

You will probably see Mr. Rockefeller on your vacation in the Tetons. He will want to talk with you about his interest in extrasensory perception, paranormal phenomena, and UFO's. His interests are related to those of Senator Pell.

Soon after you were inaugurated, Les Aspin and Mel Laird referred Laurance to me concerning the famous "Roswell incident," dating from 1947, in which UFO buffs claimed a flying saucer crashed near the town of Roswell, New Mexico, and that the U.S. Air Force had classified the entire event--beginning a conspiracy theory that remains today. Rockefeller sought from me the Administration's help in "declassifying the information" and making the whole matter public and open. I persuaded Rockefeller to not bother you with this issue but instead to let me talk with defense officials to see if there was anything to the story. Subsequently, I conferred with Sheila Widnall and she arranged for a full revisiting by the Air Force of pertinent records, guaranteed "amnesty" to anyone who felt constrained to talk, etc. The Air Force report became publicly available in September 1994. It was provided to the GAO, who had been asked by Congressman Steve Schiff for the same information (summary of GAO study is attached). The bottom line is that all evidence points to a failed U.S. Air Force balloon experiment, and no evidence of a "flying saucer" or cover-up conspiracy. (However, the UFO "community" persists in believing that the Air Force report is flawed.)

A second rubric for Rockefeller's interests is what is called "human potential" research. The extreme examples usually involve precognition, super-human strength, endurance in life-saving roles, telepathy, and others. Senator Pell and others have supported the funding of research in social science to focus more on these phenomena. As you know, social sciences research is being slashed by the Republican House Appropriations, including economics, psychology, sociology, and cognitive science.

Rockefeller may thank you for the openness of the Administration, including his ability to work with me, and for Secretary Widnall's cooperation. I told him that you strongly favor openness in government and that we need his help in pushing for strong support of your science and technology investments that Congress is cutting. He knows that we are trying to be helpful in responding to his concerns about UFO's and human potential--and that we're keeping an open mind about such matters--but I've made no secret about my conviction that we must not be too diverted from more earthly imperatives.

"Results of a Search for Records Concerning the 1947 Crash Near Roswell, New Mexico," Report to the Honorable Steven H. Schiff, House of Representatives, United States General Accounting Office, National Security and International Affairs Division," Report B-262046, July 28, 1995, p. 2.

Results in Brief

In 1947, Army regulations required that air accident reports be maintained permanently. We identified four air accidents reported by the Army Air Forces in New Mexico during July 1947. All of the accidents involved military aircraft and occurred after July 8, 1947—the date the RAAF public information office first reported the crash and recovery of a "flying disc" near Roswell. The Navy reported no air accidents in New Mexico during July 1947. Air Force officials told us that according to record-keeping requirements in effect during July 1947, there was no requirement to prepare a report on the crash of a weather balloon.

In our search for records concerning the Roswell crash, we learned that some government records covering RAAF activities had been destroyed and others had not. For example, RAAF administrative records (from Mar. 1945 through Dec. 1949) and RAAF outgoing messages (from Oct. 1946 through Dec. 1949) were destroyed. The document disposition form does not indicate what organization or person destroyed the records and when or under what authority the records were destroyed.

Our search for government records concerning the Roswell crash yielded two records originating in 1947—a July 1947 history report by the combined 509th Bomb Group and RAAF and an FBI teletype message dated July 8, 1947. The 509th-RAAF report noted the recovery of a "flying disc" that was later determined by military officials to be a radar-tracking balloon. The FBI message stated that the military had reported that an object resembling a high-altitude weather balloon with a radar reflector had been recovered near Roswell.

The other government records we reviewed, including those previously withheld from the public because of security classification, and the Air Force's analysis of unidentified flying object¹ sightings from 1946 to 1953 (Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14), did not mention the crash or the recovery of an airborne object near Roswell in July 1947. Similarly, executive branch agencies' responses to our letters of inquiry produced no other government records on the Roswell crash.
