

Jimmy Carter, the Nobel Prize, and Extraterrestrials

Grant Cameron

The most recent winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, former President Jimmy Carter, has long been interested in the peaceful co-existence of humans on this planet. If historic records are any indication, however, it appears that the former President has long held a similar interest in peaceful relations with extraterrestrials who might be visiting this planet, since his sighting of a strange unidentified object in Leary, Georgia in 1969.

Carter has always been open to talking about the 1969 UFO sighting, which he described as a "very remarkable sight," and "the darndest thing I have ever seen." The Philadelphia Inquirer wrote that "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" had been the President's favorite movie while in the White House. Carter has talked about it in many question and answer sessions following speeches, or on open-line talk show promoting the many books he has written.

In a recently released audio tape of a 1976 reply to questions put to him by National Enquirer reporter Jim McCandlish, Carter described the now infamous 1969 sighting, and how if he became President he would release all the UFO files to the United States people. The transcript of that encounter is as follows.

Q: Governor, you once saw a UFO. If you were President would you reopen inquiries into UFOs?

Carter: Well, no. What I would do is make information we have about those sightings available to the public (three words unclear). I have never tried to identify what I saw. You know, it was a light in the western sky that was very unique. I had never seen it before. There were about 20 of us who saw it. None of us could figure out what it was. I don't think it was anything solid. It was just like a light. It was a curious aberration, so I don't make fun of people who say they've seen unidentified objects in the sky.

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Q: The United States used to have a body that investigated UFOs, but that's been discontinued. Would you reopen it?

Carter: I don't know yet.

Presidential candidate Carter also made a similar promise in Appleton, Wisconsin on the morning of March 31, 1976, during a question and answer session. Carter was asked by Thomas Heiman, Associate Director of the UFO Education Center in Appleton Wisconsin whether he would as President, "air what's "behind-closed-doors" today in regards to UFOs?"

Carter replied, "Yes, I would make these kinds of data available to the public, as President, to help resolve the mystery about it."

"On a public basis?" asked Heiman. "Yes," replied Carter, "on a public basis."

Once Jimmy Carter became President, however, records at the Carter library show that the Carter White House did everything in its power to avoid the Wisconsin group even though Carter had promised " a meeting could be arranged sometime after the election" when he could meet with the group and review the UFO material they had.

The McCandlish and Wisconsin encounters illustrate the very few times Jimmy Carter ever talked about UFOs in relation to the White House. When asked about presidential knowledge and involvement in the UFO mystery, Carter has almost always sidetracked the issue to talk about the 1969 UFO sighting.

An example of this reluctance to discuss his presidential role can be found in the most recent encounter between Jimmy Carter and the UFO question, which occurred last year. Documentary producers Tim Coleman and James Fox approached the ex-president about UFOs while he was doing a book signing. The men planned to use the segment in their soon to be released UFO documentary called "Out of the Blue."

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When asked about his UFO sighting Carter was very forthright quickly saying that it was interesting and mysterious. However, when he was asked the second question about whether or not he did look into the UFO issue during his presidency, the enthusiasm ended. Carter simply replied, "Yes, but there's a lot of different answers and nobody knows...has proof of things."

This reluctance to discuss the government's role could be partly due to wake-up call that the President-elect Carter got while being briefed by then CIA Director George Bush. According to prominent civil rights attorney Danny Sheehan, Bush made Jimmy Carter aware of how UFOs would be treated once he became President.

Sheehan stated that he had been told the story by Marcia Smith, then Director of the Science and Technology Division of the Library of Congress' Congressional Research Service. In 1977, shortly after Carter entered the White House, she had been asked to do two studies for the Chairman of the Science & Technology Committee of the House of Representatives. The reports would then find their way to the White House.

Sheehan, then General Counsel to the United States Jesuit National Headquarters - National Office of Social Ministry in Washington, was invited to participate in the two studies, which he described as a "highly classified major evaluation of the UFO phenomena, and extraterrestrial intelligence."

According to what Marcia Smith told Sheehan in 1977, President-elect Carter had asked Bush for the material on UFOs during his November 1976 intelligence briefing provided by the CIA. "I want to have the information that we have on UFOs and extraterrestrial intelligence." Carter had asked. "I want to know about this as President."

George Bush, according to Marcia Smith, said, "No . . . that he wasn't going to give this to him . . . that this was information that existed on a need to know basis only. Simple curiosity on the part of the President wasn't adequate."

"If he was going to do this he would have to follow a different procedure," recalled Sheehan, "that was going to involve all the different branches of government in authorizing this information, because they were afraid that President Carter was going to somehow publicly

reveal this. Bush told him that he was going have to go to the Science and Technology Committee of the House of Representatives, in the legislative branch, and have them ask the Congressional Research Service to issue a request to have certain documents declassified so that this process could go on."

President Carter followed the instructions given to him by Bush, and Marcia Smith did produce two reports, which have never been made public. One was on UFOs, and one was on extra terrestrial intelligence. Sheehan stated that in one of the reports he reviewed it was concluded, "There are from two to six highly intelligent, highly technological developed civilizations in our own galaxy over and above our ours." Sheehan added that the report stated that the investigation was "unable to discount" that one of these vehicles was not from one of these two to six civilizations.

Carter went on to request a number of other UFO inquiries and studies in his first months as President. These included a study known as the "Carter Extraterrestrial Communication Study" contracted to the Center for the Study of Social Policy at the Stanford Research Institute. The initial contact within the Carter White House for the proposal was Stewart Eisenstatt, with the Domestic Policy Staff. The Pentagon reportedly killed it three months later.

Efforts included the Carter transitional people contacting or meeting with UFO researchers such as Robert Barrow, Jacques Vallee, J. Allen Hynek, and Bill Pitts. Barrow, for example, was contacted about participating in another undefined UFO study. Barrow was not contacted again, so it is not known if this particular study went forward.

Another study of UFOs that was done for President Carter in the early days of the administration was known as the "L.A. Study." It was put together for the President by a number of UFO researchers in the Los Angeles area. The researchers have told their side of the story, but no records of this study appear at the Carter library.

Trusted Carter staff members made most of the approaches to the various government agencies about UFOs. One such case was Press Secretary Jody Powell who approached the FBI about their past UFO efforts. The FBI files tell little of this request, probably because it was done by phone. Authors Lawrence Fawcett and Barry Greenwood reported, however, that once Powell made the inquiry, the FBI Academy at Quantico, Virginia suddenly "began monitoring and collecting newspaper clippings that dealt with the UFO subject...under the curious file reference of TRANSPORTATION."

Dr. Press, President Carter's Science Advisor, made the UFO contact to NASA. He wrote NASA administrator Dr. Robert Frosch, asking for help with the UFO mail problem, (the Carter White House was being inundated with UFO mail because of his campaign promise to release the UFO files) but also suggesting it might be time for another study of the UFO issue. Press suggested that a panel of prominent scientists such as Carl Sagan might "conduct an investigation of the validity and significance of UFO reports." NASA, aware of the probable public relations problems involved with reopening the UFO can of worms, declined Dr. Press's request for a new UFO investigation.

Although Carter's attempts to get a new study on UFOs failed, he presided over what is sometimes known as the "golden years" of government UFO disclosures. During the Carter administration literally thousands of UFO documents were released through FOIAs by various government entities such as the FBI, NSA, NASA, State, Air Force, Navy, and Army. What Carter's role was in the releases is unknown, but there has been nothing quite like it since Carter left the White House.

Although President Carter made many attempts to get the answer to the UFO mystery, as he promised during his presidential campaign, most efforts failed. The Washington insiders, who Carter had run his entire campaign against, cut him off from the UFO answers which they controlled.

The military industrial complex, usually more in line with Republican administrations, was upset at Carter for his canceling of the B-1 bomber program, a \$5 billion dollar cut in defense spending, plans to shelve the neutron bomb, veto a nuclear aircraft carrier, and his leak during the 1980 presidential campaign where he publicly told the public, and the Russians, that secret work was taking place on a thing called the Stealth fighter.

George Bush described the negative feeling also held towards President Carter by the intelligence community. He had been the first CIA Director in four administrations to be effectively fired by the new Carter administration. Hundreds of CIA agents followed him out onto the street once Carter entered the White House.

In his autobiography, Bush described Carter's attacks on the CIA as "frequent and vituperative." The hatred for the CIA, according to Bush began even when he was briefing Carter on

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intelligence secrets in 1976. Bush wrote, "Beneath his surface cool, he (Carter) harbored a deep antipathy to the CIA." It is then no wonder, that when it came to the deepest darkest secret held by the government, that Carter found himself on the outside looking in.

As Jimmy Carter receives his Nobel Peace Prize, it might be important to note that other important Peace Prize winners have also taken an interest in the extraterrestrial angle of world peace. Former Prime Minister of Canada, Lester B. Pearson actually brought up the extraterrestrial possibilities during his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957.

"Perhaps there is a hopeful possibility here in the conquest of outer space. Interplanetary activity may well give us planetary peace. Once we discover Martian spaceships hovering over Earth's air-space, we will all come together."

"How dare they threaten us like this!" we shall shout, as one, at a really United Nations!"