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National Aeronautics and Space Administration

NASA Headquarters

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Washington, DC 20546



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The US Government and Unidentified Flying Objects

No branch of the United States Government is currently involved with or responsible for investigations into the possibility of alien life on other planets or for investigating Unidentified Flying Objects (UFO's). The US Air Force (USAF) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) have had intermittent, independent investigations of the possibility of alien life on other planets; however, none of these has produced factual evidence that life exists on other planets, nor that UFO's are related to aliens. From 1947 to 1969, the Air Force investigated UFO's; then in 1977, NASA was asked to examine the possibility of resuming UFO investigations. After studying all of the facts available, it was determined that nothing would be gained by further investigation, since there was an absence of tangible evidence.

*How would
NASA know?
what factual
evidence?*

In October 1992, NASA was directed by Congress to begin a detailed search for artificial radio signals from other civilizations under the NASA Towards Other Planetary Systems (TOPS)/High Resolution Microwave Survey (HRMS) program (also known as the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence project). Congress directed NASA to end this project in October 1993, citing pressures on the US Federal budget. The HRMS did not detect any confirmed signal before it was stopped. However, similar work will continue in a more limited manner through efforts of private groups and through academic institutions. The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Institute (SETI Institute) in Mountain View, CA, effectively replaced the Government project, borrowing the signal processing system from NASA. The SETI Institute is a nonprofit corporation conducting research in a number of fields including all science and technology aspects of astronomy and planetary sciences, chemical evolution, the origin of life, biological evolution, and cultural evolution.

During several space missions, NASA astronauts have reported phenomena not immediately explainable; however, in every instance NASA determined that the observations could not be termed

"abnormal" in the space environment. The 1947 to 1969 USAF investigations studied UFO's under Project Blue Book. The project, headquartered at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, was terminated December 17, 1969. Of the total of 12,618 sightings reported to Project Blue Book, 701 remain "unidentified."

The decision to discontinue UFO investigations was based on an evaluation of a report prepared by the University of Colorado entitled, "Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects;" a review of the University of Colorado's report by the National Academy of Sciences; previous UFO studies; and Air Force experience investigating UFO reports during the 1940's, '50's and '60's. As a result of experience, investigations, and studies since 1948, the conclusions of Project Blue Book were: (1) no UFO reported, investigated, and evaluated by the Air Force was ever a threat to our national security; (2) there was no evidence submitted to, or discovered by, the Air Force that sightings categorized as "unidentified" represented technological developments or principles beyond the range of modern scientific knowledge; and (3) there was no evidence indicating that sightings categorized as "unidentified" were extraterrestrial vehicles.

With the termination of Project Blue Book, the USAF regulation establishing and controlling the program for investigating and analyzing UFO's was rescinded. Documentation regarding the former Project Blue Book investigation was permanently transferred to the Modern Military Branch, National Archives and Records Service, in Washington, DC 20408, and is available for public review and analysis.

Since the termination of Project Blue Book, nothing has occurred that would support a resumption of UFO investigations by the USAF or NASA. Given the current environment of steadily decreasing defense and space budgets, it is unlikely that the Air Force or NASA will become involved in this type of costly project in the foreseeable future.

Since neither NASA nor the Air Force is engaged in day-to-day UFO research, neither one reviews UFO-related articles intended for publication, evaluates UFO-type spacecraft drawings, or accepts accounts of UFO sightings or applications for employment in the field of aerial phenomena investigation

UFO Points of Contact

1. For further information on the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, please contact the SETI Institute, 2035 Landings Drive, Mountain View, CA 94043, (415) 960-4530.

2. News media requiring Project Blue Book files should contact the National Archives Public Affairs Office, (202) 501-5525. Public queries should be addressed to the Project Blue Book archivist at (202) 501-5385. For queries not related to Project Blue Book, contact the National Archives receptionist at (202) 501-5400. Documentation is available from: Modern Military Branch, National Archives and Records Service, Eighth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20408.
 3. The Air Force publication, "The Roswell Report: Fact vs. Fiction in the New Mexico Desert," a lengthy document providing all of the details available from the Air Force on the Roswell incident, is available for \$52 from the US Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328.
 4. There are a number of universities and professional scientific organizations that have considered UFO phenomena during periodic meetings and seminars. A list of private organizations interested in aerial phenomena may be found in *Gale's Encyclopedia of Associations*.
 5. Persons wishing to report UFO sightings are advised to contact law enforcement agencies.
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RECORD NO: 004201

SERIES: Biographies

SUBSERIES: NASA Administrators

FOLDER TITLE: Frosch [Robert A.] (Correspondence 1966-77)

DESCRIPTION: Miscellaneous correspondence re report to Congress on disposal of foreign excess property; NASA role in research of unidentified flying objects (UFO); agreement with the European Space Agency (ESA) for development of demultiplexers for Spacelab; NASA-industry cooperation on projects using Landsat data; NASA policy on items flown in astronaut personal preference kits (PPK); transition and costs for launch of Intelsat 5 on Space Shuttle; NASA facilities not in compliance with the Clean Air Act; contracts with Operations Research Inc.; NASA-Department of Energy (DoE) advanced automobile propulsion systems project; termination of Apollo Lunar Surface Experiments Package (ALSEP) monitoring; proposed use of balloons for transport of shuttle external tanks to Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB); review of the Technology Utilization Program and Calibration Program; Interagency Nuclear Safety Review Panel (INSRP); exclusion of blind workers from the Vertical Assembly Building (VAB) and Orbiter Processing Facility (OPF); personnel management and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) programs; comments on bill authorizing NASA to appoint senior officials; FY1978 authorization bill; government use of communications satellites; reliability of Space Shuttle in launch phase; work of Keith Glennan on the US Weather Modification Program; assignment of responsibility for planetary exploration to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory rather than the Ames Research Center (ARC); FY1976-FY1978 funding for LACIE remote sensing program; FY1978 budget for purchase of shuttle orbiters 3,4, and 5; assessment of the current space program by James Fletcher; NASA's relationship with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB); Navy proposal for experiments using data from Earth Resources Technology Satellites (ERTS) and the Skylab Earth Resources Experiments Package (EREP); NASA membership on the Earth Resources Survey Program Review Committee; NASA research on the F14 aircraft for the US Navy (USN); establishment of the National Oceanographic Instrumentation Center; and contracting for the hypersonic ramjet experiment project. Includes press releases re NASA reorganization and appointment of Isaac T. Gillam IV as Deputy Director of the Dryden Flight Research Center (DFRC).

INVITED ESSAY

UFOs and NASA

RICHARD C. HENRY

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Abstract—In 1977 President Carter's Science Advisor recommended that a small panel of inquiry be formed by NASA to see if there had been any new significant findings on UFOs since the US Air Force-sponsored investigation of UFOs ("Condon Report") a decade earlier. Five months later, NASA responded to that recommendation by proposing "to take no steps to establish a research activity in this area or to convene a symposium on the subject." This article offers a partial inside look at how that decision was made at NASA.

Introduction

Forty years ago Kenneth Arnold's sighting of "flying saucers" inaugurated the modern era of observation of Unidentified Flying Objects, or UFOs. The possibility that some UFOs are actually spacecraft, bearing intelligent beings from another world, has focused intense public interest on the subject.

While only a very small number of reputable scientists has ever taken UFOs seriously, the related search for radio signals from other civilizations has slowly increased in "respectability" over the decades following the pioneering suggestion of such searches by Cocconi and Morrison (1959). A turning point occurred, however, when Hart (1975), and Tipler (1980), argued convincingly that an intelligent civilization in the galaxy would rapidly physically colonize the galaxy (see also Jones, 1981). Their suggested conclusion is that we are in fact the only civilization in our galaxy, if not the Universe.

An alternative conclusion is that one should perhaps take more seriously the possibility that some UFO reports do represent manifestations of galactic intelligence.

The canonical study of that possibility is "Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects" (Condon & Gillmor, 1968), the so-called "Condon Report," which concluded, despite Condon's clearly negative feelings about the value of UFO study, that of 59 cases studied, two involved "probable UFOs" and two "possible UFOs" (Sturrock, 1987).

Over the second half of the year 1977, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration found itself, as a result of a letter from the White House, considering whether more should be done on the subject of UFOs, and in particular, whether NASA should do it.

Bernhard M. Haisch
Editor, JSE

NASA's final response, which came at the end of 1977, was worded cautiously, but in effect said "no" to the White House. The present paper bears on how NASA coped with the White House request.

Acceptance by the establishment of the notion that alien intelligences are active in the vicinity of the Earth, would involve a profound change in a fundamental paradigm that governs our activity as a society. (For example, President Reagan has remarked, to Mikhail Gorbachev, that American and Soviet societies would bury their differences if the world were threatened by an alien intelligence.)

Also, NASA has a large science constituency. According to a *Science Magazine* report (16 December, 1977, p. 1128) "NASA seems to fear that the reopening of the question of the genuineness of visitors from outer space will legitimize a subject most establishment scientists consider phony and a waste of time."

How exactly did NASA cope with this "hot potato," and why did NASA decline the White House request? In the next section I describe NASA's interaction with the White House, and in the following section I specify more completely the aim of the present paper. The remainder of the paper details aspects of NASA's activity in dealing with the White House request.

UFOs: NASA and the White House

On July 21, 1977, Dr. Frank Press, Science Advisor to President Jimmy Carter, sent a "Dear Bob" letter to Dr. Robert Frosch, Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The letter opens by indicating that the White House "is becoming a focal point for an increasing number of inquiries concerning UFO's," and Press suggests that NASA should instead become the focal point for general correspondence, and that those inquiries which come to the White House henceforth be sent to the designated desk at NASA.

Press goes on, however, to say that "since it has been nearly a decade since the Condan (sic) report, I believe that a small panel of inquiry could be formed to see if there are any new significant findings" on the subject of UFOs. He suggested that the panel of inquiry "could be formed by NASA," and stated that "since this is a public relations problem as much as anything else, people who are known to be interested in the problem and also highly known, such as Carl Sagan, ought to be involved."

His letter is reproduced at the end of the paper as Appendix 1.

NASA, and the country, were aware that President Carter himself had once reported a UFO sighting. In an early draft of an Information Sheet (Number 78-1), prepared in early 1978 (that is, following NASA's responses to Press's letters), NASA described Carter's sighting as follows:

PRESIDENT CARTER'S UFO SIGHTING—While serving as Governor of Georgia, Mr. Carter reported to NICAP that he had seen a bright, moving object in the sky over Leary, GA in October 1969. He said the object was visible for 10 to 12 minutes

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and, at one point, shone as brightly as the Moon. The regional NICAP representative investigated the sighting and reported there was no evidence to support anything beyond placing what Mr. Carter saw in its "unidentified" category.

Thus, it could not be completely clear to Dr. Frosch exactly what the significance of Press's letter was—simply **an attempt to clear Press's desk of mail** that he was not equipped to answer, **or a White House expression of real interest in UFOs.**

Frosch responded to Press on September 6, 1977 (Appendix 2), indicating that NASA was "inclined to agree with your recommendation," but indicating that "there are a number of questions that need to be resolved before any formal program is undertaken." In particular he noted that "a panel of inquiry such as you suggest . . . would require some additional resources [money] for the inquiry and for follow on activity . . . we should assure ourselves that an inquiry is justified. I believe we could do this by naming a NASA project officer to review reports of the last ten years and to provide a specific recommendation relative to any further inquiry by the end of this year. If you concur, I will initiate this action." He enclosed, for Press's information, **a NASA Information Sheet (76-6) on "Unidentified Flying Objects"** (Appendix 3). Press gave the requested concurrence on September 14, 1977 (Appendix 4).

Then, on December 21, 1977, Frosch, in a remarkable letter to Press, "proposed" that "NASA take no steps to establish a research activity in this area [UFO's] or to convene a symposium on the subject" (Appendix 5). There is no mention of a project officer, or of any review "of reports of the last ten years," but Frosch indicates that "we have given considerable thought to the question of what else the United States might and should do in the area of UFO research. There is an absence of tangible or physical evidence available for thorough laboratory analysis," and he indicates that "we stand ready to respond to any *bona fide* physical evidence . . ."

Purpose of This Paper

What happened within NASA, resulting in the two letters that Frosch wrote to Press? How does a government agency formulate a response to, in effect, the President of the United States, on a topic of the peculiar sensitivity, interest, and controversial nature, as UFOs? It is the purpose of the present paper not to actually answer that question, but to provide information bearing on that question. To actually answer the question, as we shall see, would require substantial additional information from many individuals. Thus, the present paper represents an "interim report" that might be followed in the future by a more global inquiry by others.

In order to understand why this paper is not more comprehensive, it is necessary to understand how NASA works, and its structure.

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his or her level, not the total picture, which is seen by no one. This of course holds true in the case of my personal perspective on the NASA-White House UFO activity. Thus, in the present paper on NASA's activity regarding the UFO question, I can only present certain documents, and attempt a little detective work toward the question of "who shot John?", that is, who made the basic NASA decision concerning UFOs, a decision apparently still in force today. Let us begin.

The Author at NASA

Bland Norris telephoned me (I was an Associate Professor at The Johns Hopkins University) from Woods Hole during the summer of 1976, and in effect offered me the position of his Deputy. He was almost certainly influenced to do this by George Field, the eminent astronomer who was then head of the Physical Science Committee (PSC) (the internal NASA Committee advisory to Hinners). At Woods Hole a high-level group was studying the Hornig Committee report on the proposed management structure for the proposed Space Telescope, and some of the group apparently felt that having a scientist (such as myself) from the astrophysics community move to NASA Headquarters for a few years would help in "selling" the Space Telescope to the Office of Management and Budget, and Congress. Norris, an excellent engineer and administrator, had no knowledge of astrophysics (although he did take a Community College night course in astronomy during my period at NASA). On my arrival at Headquarters, I found that in fact Space Telescope was in excellent hands with Warren Keller and Nancy Roman. Indeed, a pleasant surprise was the uniformly excellent quality of people I found in the Office of Space Science.

At about the same time that I arrived, David Morrison, a well-known scientist from the University of Hawaii, came to occupy a roughly similar position in the Planetary Division. Morrison was to try to sell Galileo (a mission to the planet Jupiter), while I sold Space Telescope, and there was friendly rivalry between us. (Both Space Telescope and Galileo did succeed in becoming approved missions but—a decade later—neither has been launched.)

Shortly after my arrival at NASA, Hinners' Deputy, Tony Calio, strolled down the hall to my office with something on his mind. I did not know, yet, how unusual this was. He wanted someone to handle SETI, the "Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence," and he had fixed on me. As this subject is clearly relevant to NASA's attitude toward UFOs, I will expand on this, my earlier (and later) involvement with SETI.

John Billingham, at NASA's Ames Research Center, was the person who was focusing an attempt to get NASA to fund, and indeed to carry out, a radio search for extraterrestrial intelligence. A detailed report, funded by NASA (Morrison, Billingham, & Wolfe, 1977) was in preparation. Calio asked me to look into the matter and recommend whether the Office of

Space Science should have been involved. My recommendation was that NASA take a more direct approach to SETI than it had. In essence, Ames wanted to search for life on nearby stars, at space frequencies that would be used by other civilizations. This would be done by sky at a vast number of frequencies, with reduced sensitivity. I thought this was the right one, and that it was not to spend taxpayers' money on an unexperienced, rich civilization transmitting power from nearby stars. I was not aware of us and might have been.

A good indicator of the state of affairs was written (Appendix 6) in a letter (Appendix 7) to the advisor.

Billingham pressed his SETI activity and told me that the program was feasible, as a result of the lowest level of detection you tried to take it. The damage you were committed to in his usual working money for solar the solar electric program propulsion (rather than nuclear spect!). However, he

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Tony Calio himself was considerably less than the only thing Noe lack belief in the concern was for the public lecture at F whether SETI represented

It was my understanding

Space Science should fund SETI, and at what level. An interesting complication was that NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) had a different approach to SETI than had Ames, and wanted to carry out its program. In essence, Ames wanted to look with very great sensitivity at small numbers of nearby stars, at specific frequencies which Ames had somehow deduced would be used by other civilizations, while JPL wanted to survey the whole sky at a vast number of frequencies, paying the price, of course, of greatly reduced sensitivity. I quickly became convinced that the JPL approach was the right one, and that the Ames approach was a waste of money. It seemed to me that it was not right for the young, new, poor civilization (us) to have to spend taxpayers' money to get great receiving sensitivity; instead, the old, experienced, rich civilization (them) should spend the money to get great transmitting power. Also, I felt that if there were civilizations broadcasting from nearby stars, we would already know it; that in fact they would be aware of us and might even be here (UFOs?).

A good indication of my attitude on these matters is given by the letter I wrote (Appendix 6) to Major Ret. Colman S. Von Keviczky, in reply to his letter (Appendix 7) to Ichtiague Rasool (who was Hinners' personal science advisor).

Billingham pressed me hard to come up with some immediate funding for his SETI activity and, quite remarkably, I was able to do so. Someone had told me that the front office had some few hundred thousand dollars available, as a result of some reprogramming. This was unusual; normally only the lowest level people at NASA Headquarters actually had money, and if you tried to take it from them, they made you very aware of how much damage you were doing. Ed Wash, Hinners' excellent financial man, told me in his usual worried way that he had wanted to reserve the reprogramming money for solar sailing (which was about to enter a "shoot-out" with the solar electric propulsion over which was to become the planetary program propulsion "new technology" of the 1980's—rather pathetic in retrospect!). However, he gave me half the money, which I gave to Ames.

In formulating our budget for the next fiscal year, Norris and I placed the JPL program adjacent to, but above, the Ames program, with both of them right at the very bottom of our Astrophysics Budget priorities, and then we sent the budget up to Hinners for possible re-prioritization and for merging of our budget with those of the Planetary, Solar-Terrestrial, and Life Sciences (see Figure 1) Divisions.

Tony Calio himself was quite enthusiastic on the subject of SETI. Hinners was considerably less enthusiastic; in fact Calio told me at one point "this is the only thing Noel and I have ever come apart on." Possibly Hinners did lack belief in the reasonableness of SETI, but I suspect that his greatest concern was for the stature of his science program and its prospects. At a public lecture at Princeton, Hinners asked the audience to "vote" as to whether SETI represented a proper use of public funds (they agreed it did).

It was my understanding, some weeks after budget submission, that I had

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won a victory, albeit a Pyrrhic one: The NASA budget that emerged, and was sent to the President's Office of Management and Budget (OMB), contained only the JPL program, but unfortunately at too low a priority level to survive OMB. I was astonished that when the budget was returned from OMB, SETI was still included; that is, it had been moved to a sufficiently higher position in the Carter "zero-based budgeting" priority that it had survived OMB's financial knife.

This is a vivid example of how one can seldom be certain of "who shot John." For example, at whose level was the JPL program separated from the Ames program? Hinners? Frosch? And who at OMB did the reprioritizing, and why? On the latter question, I was able to obtain some information, much later. On May 17, 1978, Alan Lovelace, Frosch's Deputy, wrote to W. Bowman Cutter, Executive Associate Director for Budget, Office of Management and Budget, inviting him to come over to NASA Headquarters some evening for dinner, and an informal briefing on astronomy by me and David Morrison. Cutter had apparently expressed an interest in such a briefing some time in April. The dinner took place on July 13, 1978. Frosch was not able to be present, and neither was Hinners: The senior NASA person present was Adrienne Timothy, who had replaced Rasool, who had left NASA. The dinner and subsequent slide shows went very well; in particular, Morrison did his usual brilliant job expounding the spectacular NASA planetary images. At dinner things were sufficiently informal that I felt able to mildly enquire about how it had happened that SETI had survived OMB. Cutter replied "I took astronomy at Harvard from Carl Sagan, and I did it for Carl."

The subsequent history of SETI on Capitol Hill, was the award of a Golden Fleece by Senator Proxmire (February 16, 1978), and the rejection by Congress of initiation of a SETI program. I was the person who was invited to the Hill to expound the program to Proxmire's aide, in preparation for the Fleece—rather fun, but sad for SETI. (After I left NASA, SETI was given to Life Sciences, and Proxmire's acquiescence was somehow obtained. A SETI program—JPL and Ames—is moving forward today.)

Our presence at the Cutter dinner is an example of the special role that Morrison and I played while at NASA, as active scientists with much greater technical knowledge of our fields than almost anyone else at Headquarters (but, I must add, negligible administrative ability, at least in my case, compared with almost anyone else at Headquarters). We were called on when technical substance and scientific depth were needed. I will end this section with another example of this, which is of special interest because President Carter was directly involved.

On November 15, 1977, I found on my desk a note for Bland Norris from David Williamson, Jr. I later learned that Williamson was "Code AX," Special Projects (Hinners was Code S, Science, and I was Code SAD, Science Astrophysics Deputy; the reader can use these Codes to track "who saw what," in certain of the appendices). Williamson was located on the

seventh floor, with the prominent role in the deal. Bland said "Bland . . . Jeff is e the morning . . . Jeff ha up with a 7" Questar ele 5th floor for such an effe that my guess was right:

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The reader now has Headquarters at the tin was received. Action (s recall a Code F, and my include any Code F. O for External Affairs (C August 3, 1977, 3:30-4 in regards to Dr. Pres Crow, Dr. Hinners, M Allen, and Dr. Henry. Legislative Affairs (C Duward L. Crow was

seventh floor, with the Administrator (Code A). (Williamson will play a prominent role in the discussion, below, of the UFO situation.) The note said "Bland . . . Jeff is expected to be calling Dick starting November 16 in the morning . . . Jeff has a 3" reflector . . . Frank Press hopes we can come up with a 7" Questar electric . . . the 7th floor offers its appreciation to the 5th floor for such an effective and controlled reaction." Bland let me know that my guess was right: "Jeff" was Jeff Carter, son of President Carter.

At Bland's request, I telephoned Frank Press, who let me know that the President and/or his son (it was not clear which) wanted to borrow a small telescope to take to Camp David over Thanksgiving.

To NASA Headquarters, "telescope" is a budget item that the astronomers want too many of. What it is physically, and where one might be obtained, was unknown. I exaggerate, but certainly, Headquarters contained only paper; no telescopes. The request had been routed from Frosch (an oceanographer) to Hinners (a geologist) to Henry (an astronomer). Someone found out that Marshall Spaceflight Center, in Huntsville, Alabama, had a 7" Questar telescope, and that furthermore, by great luck, a NASA plane was flying from Huntsville to Washington the next day (Press was emphatic that the President wanted no special flights or other waste of taxpayer dollars). I called Jeff, and later I had my wife, Dr. Rita Mahon, meet me at National Airport with my car. We loaded the large wooden crate in the trunk, and arrived at the White House about seven p.m. on Friday, November 18, 1977.

Rita and I spent about half an hour with President and Mrs. Carter, Amy Carter, and Jeff and Annette Carter, assembling the Questar and trying it out on the upper floor balcony of the south side of the White House. The night was mostly cloudy, but the moon was visible. President Carter kept the telescope for about a week, and then Bland Norris and I retrieved it from Jeff, who said that his father had made good use of it at Camp David.

UFOs

The reader now has some understanding of the environment at NASA Headquarters at the time that Frosch's letter of July 21, 1977 (Appendix 1), was received. Action (see Appendix 1) was assigned to Code F, but I don't recall a Code F, and my August 1978 Headquarters telephone book does not include any Code F. On July 29, Herbert J. Rowe, Associate Administrator for External Affairs (Code L), sent a note, confirming a meeting to be held August 3, 1977, 3:30-4:00 p.m., "to discuss the position NASA should take in regards to Dr. Press' recommendation," to the following persons: Gen. Crow, Dr. Hinners, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Newman, a person representing Joe Allen, and Dr. Henry. Dr. Joseph P. Allen, who was Director of the Office of Legislative Affairs (Code C), is the well-known astronaut ("we deliver"). Duward L. Crow was Assistant to the Deputy Administrator, Alan M.

Lovelace. Robert A. Newman was the Director of the Public Affairs Division, located in Code L. I am not certain what Chapman's position was; possibly he was Deputy to Rowe. My memory of the meeting is of desultory conversation, including General Crow saying in a bemused manner that his daughter believed implicitly that as a former Air Force General, he knew all about UFOs and was keeping it secret from the public. I believe that the only result of the meeting was that action (jargon for responsibility) was handed to Dr. Hinners, to formulate a recommendation to the Administrator.

After the meeting, I spoke in the hall with Hinners, letting him know that for many years I had been Astrophysics consultant to the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO), a private UFO research group that was located in Tucson, Arizona. My motivation was partly to let Hinners know that I had some specific relevant expertise on the subject at hand, but also to "warn" him that I was not a completely disinterested neutral party on the controversial question of UFOs.

From that point on, the only meetings on the subject that I recall attending were one or two very small (or even one-on-one) meetings in his office with David Williamson Jr. Williamson impressed me as being the most intelligent person in the building. He discoursed on UFOs to me at some length, and in an extremely knowledgeable way, and, as we shall see, he formulated for Hinners' signature the recommendation that finally went to Frosch.

In the meantime, it had leaked out to the world that Henry might be designated the NASA project officer for UFOs (in the end, no one was). For example, on September 22, 1977, Alan C. Holt, of VISIT, Inc., wrote to me "We understand that your assignment as Project Officer is forthcoming and that the 2-3 month study will begin approximately October 1." I sent the letter up to Hinners, with that sentence highlighted. Hinners replied "you sure do draw 'em in, SAD. I suspect they got word of this from out there somewhere." I received a November 7, 1977 newsletter from Stanton T. Friedman which contained the item "NASA will be taking a look at the UFO question in response to a lot of pressure on the White House which in turn pressured the Science Advisor which then pushed NASA. The scientist in charge of the inquiry is Dr. Richard Henry, Department of Astrophysics at NASA Headquarters." On November 1, 1977, someone in Senator Hatfield's office telephoned NASA, and Herbert Rowe (Code L) wrote, on November 3, to Senator Hatfield, in response ". . . NASA at this time is conducting a study of the literature for approximately the last ten years to determine whether it might be worthwhile to conduct any further investigation of UFO's at this time. A project officer has been assigned to the task of reviewing the UFO literature and he is presently organizing this task . . ." Of course, by this time Frosch and Press had had an exchange of letters (Appendices 2 and 4), and Rowe surely believed that a project officer must by now have been designated. Blind copies of Rowe's letter went to two Code L files (chronological and subject) . . . and to "SA/Henry." A type-

written note was attached. I formed that a number of investigators at the time these studies would be conducted. A mark appeared at the end of the first sentence was crossed out.

In addition to a copy of the report received two communications (October 1, 1977) a copy of the report "To Richard Henry on the controversy—And the late Dr. Ed Condren on the Committee for the Study of UFO's . . . be prepared to face the country, and even the most vocal UFO investigators, and even the most vocal believers in every sector of the country have not yet been able to identify people who may write the report."

Of course, at this time I received a response to Press's letter. I said anything at all, much less a response.

On October 20, 1977, I received a letter to Press on October 6 concerning concern to Hinners. I had said more than he could say. "the NASA Project Officer's assignment, and also be prepared to face his need to know re: say that "If this project is a barn door in any way on UFO's."

On October 21, 1977, I was enquiring whether I had any previous associations. I frequently I decided to do what I previously explained in my report of October 9. The only part of the report literally mean "other than John Keel's book, I had expressed me as nonsense. I had expressed our present world-view. I intended to convey the message."

About this time, I received a project officer (Appendices 2 and 4).

written note was attached: "Who is the project officer? He should be informed that a number of definitive overview documents have been (sic) by investigators at the request of the Committee on the subject of UFO's and these studies would be of help to him in compiling this information." A blue mark appeared at the disjoint point in the second sentence, and in blue the first sentence was crossed out and "Info for Dr. Henry fr Code C." inserted.

In addition to a certain number of letters from "pro"-UFO types, I had received two communications from "debunkers"—Phil Klass sent me (October 1, 1977) a copy of his book, *UFOs Explained* (Klass, 1976) marked "To Richard Henry with the hope this may shed useful light on an old controversy—And help you and NASA avoid the fate of "Tar Baby" and the late Dr. Ed Condon!" And Robert Scheaffer wrote to me on letterhead of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, ". . . be prepared to be deluged by mail from every kook and crackpot in the country, and even worse, be prepared for letters from the 'scientific' UFO investigators, who will appear reasonable and sane enough, yet are true believers in every sense of the word . . ." I replied (October 5, 1977) "I have not yet been assigned . . . you are very kind to warn me about other people who may write to me with views that differ from your own."

Of course, at this time I was attempting to think through what NASA's response to Press should be. However, Hinners had not asked me to do anything at all, much less prepare options or recommendations.

On October 20, 1977, I apparently saw for the first time Frosch's September 6 letter to Press (Appendix 2), and I immediately communicated my concern to Hinners (Appendix 8). My concern was that Frosch had promised more than he could deliver. I took the opportunity to recommend that "the NASA Project Officer chosen be given the highest U.S. security clearance, and also be provided with a letter from President Carter establishing his need to know regarding unidentified aerial phenomena." I went on to say that "If this procedure is not followed, there will be a hole as big as a barn door in any NASA "specific recommendation" that is negative on UFO's."

On October 21, 1977, I received a telephone call from Phil Klass, mildly enquiring whether I was indeed the project officer, and whether I had had any previous association with UFOs. I answered him frankly, and subsequently I decided to put down formally on paper for Hinners what I had previously explained to him verbally. My memo is reproduced as Appendix 9. The only part of the memo that needs clarification is item 3B; I did not literally mean "other dimensions"; this phrase is a result of having read John Keel's book, *Operation Trojan Horse* (Keel, 1970). The book impressed me as nonsense, but left me with an openness to the possibility that our present world-view is *fundamentally wrong*; it is this possibility that I intended to convey succinctly.

About this time, I must have learned of Press' concurrence on naming a project officer (Appendix 4) and I was surely expecting to either be named

Public Affairs Division's position was; meeting is of desultory used manner that his General, he knew all I believe that the only (visibility) was handed Administrator.

getting him know that the Aerial Phenomena arch group that was to let Hinners know at hand, but also to neutral party on the

that I recall attend-meetings in his office as being the most UFOs to me at some I, as we shall see, he n that finally went to

that Henry might be end, no one was). For MIT, Inc., wrote to me er is forthcoming and October 1." I sent the Hinners replied "you of this from out there tter from Stanton T. taking a look at the White House which in NASA. The scientist ment of Astrophysics eone in Senator Hat- (Code L) wrote, on NASA at this time is y the last ten years to any further investiga- assigned to the task of nizing this task . . ." n exchange of letters a project officer must e's letter went to two "SA/Henry." A type-

project officer, or at least asked for advice as to who should be named. It appeared to me that Frosch was now *committed* to naming a project officer.

I expressed my thoughts as to what I would recommend be done, if I were named, in a draft memo for Hinnners to send to Frosch, but it was never typed or submitted to Hinnners for consideration, because I wasn't asked. According to the draft, Hinnners would ask Henry to ask Dr. Stephen P. Maran (of NASA's Goddard Spaceflight Center, in Greenbelt, Maryland) to be the Project Officer. Maran would spend "two months full time" assembling information on "post-Condon" UFO reports, from APRO and other "pro"-UFO organizations, and obtain comment on these reports from Klass and Schaeffer. Maran would then draft a conclusion "as to whether or not further investigation of these incidents is warranted. He will not attempt to come to a specific conclusion on any one incident; that would be the goal of a full investigation. Rather, he will examine the whole pattern of incidents and ask, and suggest an answer to, the global question, is further work indicated. In the event that he feels that the answer is yes, he will sketch the nature of such an investigation, and indicate how it might come to some definite conclusion. His report will be reviewed by Dr. Henry, myself, and David Williamson, and presented to you on January 2, 1978."

At this point, I had not spoken with Maran, but the question was moot. The request from Hinnners never came.

We now reach what, to my best information, is the critical point in NASA's efforts to deal with the UFO/White House situation. On October 31, 1977, Dave Williamson generated and distributed a draft memorandum, to be from Hinnners to the Administrator. My copy arrived in an envelope marked "EYES ONLY SA/Dr. Henry." Despite the dramatics, the document, like all documents that I read at NASA, was not classified, even so much as "Confidential."

The draft memorandum is reproduced as Appendix 10, and as far as I recollect is identical to what I finally concurred in (verbally to Hinnners) and that was sent by Hinnners to Frosch. I will not summarize Appendix 10 here, as it needs to be read in its entirety at this point.

I thought the draft masterful. I also felt that while the draft recommended Option 2, anyone reading it would instantly grab for Option 1.

There was one thing that was wrong in the memo: the claim of lack of "tangible or physical evidence." There is in fact plenty of such evidence (for what it is worth). In the event, the Administrator's final decision, clearly based on this memo, dealt directly with that defect by stating to Press (Appendix 5) "we stand ready to respond to any bona fide physical evidence from credible sources." Frosch's letter to Press in fact combines parts of each of the two options, and was drafted by Williamson (see the last line of Appendix 5).

I had mixed feelings about the situation, before and after Frosch wrote his final letter to Press. A clear anomaly in the draft memo is the recommendation that the first phases of Option 2 be run out of Headquarters, and particularly at an extraordinarily high level (Hinnners, Williamson, Chap-

man). NASA did *nothing* not sufficient manpower/budget/policy activity (title was Assistant Adm

This fact was rapidly Stanford University ast following public release know, in effect, where presented to Headqua O. B. Lloyd, Jr. (Chie received this memoran to Ken Chapman read Chapman replied on worked by Naugle/Hi dling any evidence. I material evidence. Ser proceed." The slip is t and finally scrawled o

This finally gave m detail, and I did so in a thought that (a) NASA activity should take p activity. I had by now Maran at Goddard, a Project Scientist. As n the job.

And this is the end my memo. Sturrock, analyse a sample of m UFOs, marked by m file," contains a lette supporting Hinnners' a tainly did not do mu pendix 15) represents no hand in generati information on UFO is mention in 78-1 o dence, but no suggest

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man). NASA did *nothing* substantive at Headquarters itself. There is simply not sufficient manpower for Headquarters to carry out its administrative/budget/policy activity *and* projects as well (although of course Williamson's title was Assistant Administrator for "Special Projects").

This fact was rapidly brought into focus by a letter (Appendix 11) from Stanford University astrophysicist Peter A. Sturrock to Frosch, immediately following public release of Frosch's final letter to Press. Sturrock wanted to know, in effect, where to send the tangible evidence. The problem that this presented to Headquarters was nicely summarized in a memorandum by O. B. Lloyd, Jr. (Chief, Public Services Branch, Code L; Appendix 12). I received this memorandum with a copy of a "buck slip" from Bob Newman to Ken Chapman reading "Bill raises some good points here. Comments?" Chapman replied on the same form, "the original science problem was worked by Naugle/Hinners—I suggest we ask them for a position on handling any evidence. There are now two letters in suggesting or offering material evidence. Send a note to Naugle/Hinners asking how they plan to proceed." The slip is then marked "S-1 1. Hinners," and "P-1 2. Naugle," and finally scrawled on it is "Action to SC-Henry."

This finally gave me a chance to lay out my views to Hinners in some detail, and I did so in a memorandum on January 17, 1978 (Appendix 13). I thought that (a) NASA should be active, not passive, and (b) the substantive activity should take place at a NASA Center, as with any other NASA activity. I had by now spoken briefly, on one occasion, with my friend Steve Maran at Goddard, and he had not declined the role I envisaged for a Project Scientist. As my memo makes clear, I thought he would be ideal for the job.

And this is the end of the story. There was no response from Hinners to my memo. Sturrock, I understand, pursued an attempt to have NASA analyse a sample of material believed by some to be from a UFO. My file on UFOs, marked by me (for better or for worse), "The Secret NASA UFO file," contains a letter (Appendix 14) indicating that I did a little work supporting Hinners' and Williamson's handling of the follow-up, but I certainly did not do much. The final version of Information Sheet 78-1 (Appendix 15) represents to the world NASA's official position on UFOs. I had no hand in generating it. The draft of it that I have, indicates that the information on UFO groups was provided to Code L by Williamson. There is mention in 78-1 of Frosch's offer to respond to *bona fide* physical evidence, but no suggestion as to how to go about this.

I left NASA in the fall of 1978 to resume my academic position at The Johns Hopkins University.

Conclusion

Why did NASA turn down the President of the United States on UFOs? There is only fragmentary evidence, and so no definite conclusion is possible. We can, however, look at various possibilities.

a) *Inhibition by Aliens*

A reason that I have maintained an interest in UFOs since graduate school is that they are a perfectly possible "unscientific" element in the world. By "unscientific," I mean the following. Einstein's famous dictum, "Raffiniert ist der Herrgott, aber Boschaft ist Er Nicht,"* clearly does not apply to aliens, who might be very "Boschaft" ("malicious, spiteful, mischievous, malignant, wicked") indeed. With perhaps a billion years of biotechnology behind them, they could, if so inclined, insert agents at will into our society. You might not even be aware that you are an alien agent, if you are.

No conclusion on this possibility seems possible.

b) *Inhibition by the US Government*

Does the US government know all about UFOs and did a carefully placed person within NASA act to deflect/discourage any NASA investigation of UFOs?

There is some evidence, although it may well be fraudulent, of a US government "cover up" on UFOs (Moseley, 1987).

The person who "shot John" on UFOs, at NASA, surely was Dave Williamson (although he clearly had aid from others, including the author). His role in doing so was not at all hidden. On Saturday, November 26, 1977, while President Carter was using the Questar at Camp David, I was in a swimming pool in Florida. I happened to glance at a newspaper vending machine, and an eerie feeling of unreality swept over me. Staring at me was Dave Williamson, in a front-page photograph.

The notion that Williamson, or someone else at NASA, knowing that UFOs do include clear evidence for alien intelligence, deflected the inquiry to protect this government-held secret, can, I think, probably be rejected, simply because if it were true, why would the President or his science advisor have made the request in the first place? Of course, one could still imagine a "John Poindexter"-type isolation of the President, but this seems unlikely.

c) *Belief by NASA That UFOs Are Nonsense*

All I can say regarding this possibility is that I myself do not think that UFOs are nonsense, and no one at NASA Headquarters ever expressed such views in my presence. The general attitude seemed to me to be what I might call "repressed open mindedness."

d) *Fear of Ridicule*

I felt this myself, and expressed it to Hinners (Appendix 9).

NASA Headquarters scientists and administrators had no fear of the scientific community. As no man is a hero to his valet, so no Nobel Prize

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e) *More Important Th*

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The manuscript of David Williamson, ar ing for himself and H of hard evidence was entertained a great nt we developed a simpl NASA (with a quite glad we had the cour responded but had n marked it "I don't ha sentence "The most

* "The Lord God is subtle, but He is not malicious."

winner is a hero to his grant administrator. But the negative reputation of UFO studies clearly had its effect on NASA.

e) More Important Things To Do

I have a note, dated November 29, 1977, from "Noel" [Hinners] to "Dave" [Williamson] reading "A sampler! It's obvious that going route of Option 1 will buy us neg. kudos but let's just be prepared. An Option 1 decision based on *no* look is fraught with the difficulties we've been discussing."

The Option 1 that is mentioned is presumably that in the Williamson draft memorandum (Appendix 10).

This suggests that Hinners favored Option 1. Just as in the case of Hinners' attitude on SETI, I speculate that his fundamental motivation was a desire not to cloud his extremely effective NASA space science program with activity that might detract in some way. I felt the same way. Perhaps in this affair, having a positive attitude to UFO study, I should have taken a more aggressive stance than I did, but I was worried about having to pay for it: If you are the one who wants it, generally you are the one who pays for it, and I considered it wrong to spend astrophysics funds on UFO study, despite feeling that UFO study was a worthy use of public funds. Also, I did not feel that a Goddard project was very likely to produce a more substantial result than did Condon's Colorado project. The only real defect in the Colorado project was in the Director's inaccurate summary, not the substance of the investigation itself. If the UFO phenomenon includes an element that is due to the presence of an alien intelligence in our vicinity, it was doubtful to me that that fact could ever be established by a "Blue Book" or "Colorado" or my proposed "Goddard" and its follow-up, that is, by incremental investigation and accumulation of cases of varying degrees of credibility. Carl Sagan has said that extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof, and he is right. Extraordinary proof of the "reality" of UFOs cannot easily come from us; it must surely come from the UFOs, if it will.

Postscript

The manuscript of this paper was sent to President Carter, Frank Press, David Williamson, and Noel Hinners for comment. Williamson, responding for himself and Hinners, made clear that the NASA program of analysis of hard evidence was considerably more extensive than I had realized: "We entertained a great number of inquiries and ran a number of analyses . . . we developed a simple procedure for anyone's getting a suspect sample to NASA (with a quitclaim so we could cut, drill holes, and so on) . . . I am glad we had the courage to do the right thing for the right reason." Press responded but had no comment to make. Carter returned my letter and marked it "I don't have any comment, except below"; and below, beside my sentence "The most important point that you could clarify, if you will, is

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whether you yourself were behind Frank Press' letter of July 21, 1977, to NASA," is the word "no."

Author's Note. Photo reproduction (rather than typesetting) has been used for the Appendices, in order to leave clear and apparent all of the tracking notes and approvals that are on the original documents. Some price is paid, of course, in terms of legibility.

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July 21, 1977,

Dear Bob:

We have discovered a focal point for UFO's. As you are of interest in this problem, you are involved. Those equipped to handle this problem are interested in this problem as much as you are. Carl Sagan, our focal point, is that could be

It seems to me that the focal point has been nearly a century ago a small panel of any new significant problem as much as you are interested in it. Carl Sagan, our focal point, is that could be

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Robert Frosch
Administrator
National Aeronautics and
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Washington, D. C.

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Appendix I

July 21, 1977, Letter From Dr. Frank Press to Dr. Robert Frosch

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20500

July 21, 1977

Dear Bob:

We have discovered that the White House is becoming the focal point for an increasing number of inquiries concerning UFO's. As you know, there appears to be a national revival of interest in the matter with a younger generation becoming involved. Those of us in the Executive Office are ill-equipped to handle these kinds of inquiries.

It seems to me that the focal point for the UFO question ought to be in NASA. I recommend two things: since it has been nearly a decade since the Condon report, I believe that a small panel of inquiry could be formed to see if there are any new significant findings. Since this is a public relations problem as much as anything else, people who are known to be interested in the problem and also highly known, such as Carl Sagan, ought to be involved. This is a panel of inquiry that could be formed by NASA.

The second thing I would like to suggest is that NASA become the focal point for general correspondence and that those inquiries which come to the White House be sent to the designated desk at NASA.

Yours sincerely,

Frank

Frank Press
Director

Robert Frosch
Administrator
National Aeronautics and
Space Administration
Washington, D.C. 20546

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R. C. Henry

Appendix 2

September 6, 1977, Letter From Dr. Robert Frosch to Dr. Frank Press

by: SA/D. Henry

~~SA/D~~
~~SA/D~~

SEP 6 1977

Honorable Frank Press
Director
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Frank:

In your letter of July 21 you expressed the view that NASA should be the focal point for UFO matters, and specifically recommended that a panel of inquiry be formed by NASA to see if there are any significant new findings since the Condon report and that NASA become the focal point for general correspondence and inquiries.

While we are inclined to agree with your recommendation, there are a number of questions which need to be resolved before any formal program is undertaken. You may know that the Air Force served as the focal point for UFO matters during the 1960's and devoted considerable resources to the program. It, however, concluded, in the absence of significant findings, that the program warranted no more than routine form letter answers to inquiries and has been handling the program in that manner since about 1970. It now handles a small number of inquiries, perhaps 10 to 12 monthly. NASA, likewise, handles routine inquiries by form letter response, 10 to 12 formal inquiries and a somewhat larger number of public inquiries monthly. NASA uses the information sheet attached in its responses. The Air Force uses similar data.

From the point of view of the Administration as a whole, this is economical. However, it fails to provide a recognized focal point for technical appraisal of sightings and understandably results in some frustration to individuals making what they consider to be serious inquiries.

A panel of inquiry such as you suggest might possibly discover new significant findings. It would certainly generate current

interest and cost
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committing to the
that an inquiry
naming a NASA panel
ten years and to
to any further
I will initiate

Very truly yours:

Original Sign: R. F.
Robert A. Frosch

Robert A. Frosch
Administrator

Enclosure

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Dr. Frank Press

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interest and could lead to the designation of NASA as the focal point for UFO matters. It would require some additional resources for the inquiry and for follow-on activity. Before committing to this, I feel that we should assure ourselves that an inquiry is justified. I believe we could do this by naming a NASA project officer to review reports of the last ten years and to provide a specific recommendation relative to any further inquiry by the end of this year. If you concur, I will initiate this action.

Very truly yours,

Original Signed By
Robert A. Frosch

Robert A. Frosch
Administrator

Enclosure

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