

Mount Wilson and Palomar observatories pointed out that a vehicle 200 km (125 mi) in diameter, at an altitude of 30 miles (50 km), would leave a broad track on photographic plates and the sky taken with large telescopes. That track could be distinguished easily from images of ordinary astronomical objects, such as stars, meteors, and comets. Nevertheless, it appears that such tracks or anomalous visual observations of "flickers" in UFO's have never been made by professional astronomers.

In the Harvard Motion Project performed in New Mexico during the period 1954-1958, numerous photographic observations were made by Super-8-film gun camera, with a 10" (25 cm) view. In all, a surface of about 7,000 square miles (7,700 sq km) was observed to a height of about 30 miles (50 km) for a total of some 3,000 hours. Visual and photographic observations were made which could detect objects placed as far as the distance appears visible to the naked eye. These observations by professional astronomers were made in a locale and period characterized by extensive reports of unidentified flying objects. No explained objects were detected, despite the fact that rapidly moving objects were being sought in a study of meteors. Similar negative results, obtained by large numbers of astronomers, help to explain the general skepticism of astronomers toward flying saucer reports.

A review of pending and well publicized flying saucer sightings in the mid-1950's assisted by the appointment of a government investigating panel, this time under the aegis of the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board. It is significant that this panel was convened not at the request of the operational or intelligence arms of the Air Force, but in response to a request by the Air Force policy relations office. The panel, after the chairmanship of Brian O'Brien, a member of the House, met in February 1956 and established general conclusions of the Robertson panel. It recommended that the Air Force make a more thoroughgoing effort to investigate selected UFO reports of particular interest, although the possibility of acquiring significant scientific information rather than psychophysical seemed small. The O'Brien panel suggested that the Air Force establish a group of bases at various points within the United States in order to respond rapidly to UFO reports. Each team would consist of (1) a physical scientist familiar with upper atmospheric and astronomical phenomena, (2) a

clinical psychologist, and (3) a trained observer. In October 1956, the University of Colorado was selected by the Air Force Office of Scientific Research to manage this program and to prepare a thorough analysis of the UFO problem. The National Academy of Sciences agreed to appoint a panel to review the Colorado report.

Speculations of Extraterrestrial Origin—discussed sightings of UFO's, and the persistence of the Air Force neither to eliminate sightings nor simply in ignoring away the sightings, have suggested to some that a temporary failure to connect from the public the true nature of the UFO's might not at least a modification of the established line of pursuit of the sightings in space consists of intelligent extraterrestrial beings observing the earth and its inhabitants?

It now seems probable that the earth is, and the only inhabited planet in the universe. There is evidence that many of the structures may have planetary systems. Furthermore, research concerning the origin of life on earth suggests that the physical and chemical processes leading to the origin of life occur rapidly in the early history of the majority of planets. From the point of view of natural selection, the advantages of intelligence and technical civilization are obvious and some scientists believe that a large number of planets within our Milky Way galaxy—perhaps as many as a million—are inhabited by technical civilizations in various stages of our own.

Interstellar space flight is far beyond our present technical capabilities, but there seems to be no fundamental physical objections to it. It would be such a procedure, from our present vantage point, but possibility of its development by other civilizations. But if each of, say, a million advanced technical civilizations in our galaxy launched at random an interstellar spacecraft each year (and even for an advanced civilization, such a launching would not be a trivial undertaking), and even if all of them could reach our solar system with equal facility, our solar system would, on the average, be visited only once every 180,000 years.

UFO enthusiasts have sometimes caricatured the skeptic for his anthropocentrism. Actually, the assumption that earth is visited only by interstellar spacecraft is far more anthropocentric—sticking at a time more overriding significance to our small planet. If our view of the frequency of intelligence in the galaxy are correct, there is no reason why the earth should