

SAUCER-EYED SPIES

UFO UPDATE

By Art Gatti

The recent release of top-secret files by the CIA, Air Force, DIA, and others has added the U.S. intelligence community to the throngs who are, if not believers in UFOs, at least ardent collectors of sighting reports and related data. The inability of those files to explain the enigma can only bring us to a single, albeit vague, conclusion: Indeed, there's something there. As far as our national security forces are concerned, the UFOs are not the creation of individual or mass delusions.

With all due respect to those servants of pure science determined to keep the statistical 10 percent of unexplainables at 10 percent and no higher, the time has come to give up those mindless rituals with which we face the Unknown. It's time to stop clutching at those reassuring IFOs and to quit kidding ourselves that the 90:10 ratio of identifiable to unidentifiables can ever be reduced to the 100:zilch some debunkers want to believe is possible.

If anything settles the irreversible acceptance of the phenomenon, it's that stack of UFO files declassified in the current Freedom of Information (FOI) suit brought against the CIA and USAF by the Citizens Against UFO Secrecy (CAUS).

The declassification of the Air Force Blue Book files a few years back, intended to underplay UFOs by depriving them of their priority status, only served to convince once-uninterested citizens that there was something to UFOs. Maybe it was only a few hundred out of several thousand cases, but they were on official record.

That's stale information now, however. It's been a decade since the Air Force stopped investigating. The current suit demands to know what is going on. Not only did the judge rule in favor of CAUS's basic action, but he attached a subsidiary ruling that forces the agency to research files in other departments where there was any interagency communication on UFOs. Peter Gersten, CAUS's legal dynamo, plans to continue the suit against every U.S. intelligence organization, including the "untouchable" and very

secretive National Security Agency.

In a superficial way, the government has been following judicial directives and submitting to those demands; it has told CAUS essentially what CAUS already knows. But, like the ratio of knowns to unknowns in sightings, that's only 90-percent true—10 percent of the information *is* news, and some of it may have been inadvertently disclosed.

The thousands of unexplained sightings in the CIA files are but the raw material from which one would assume some evaluations must have been made; yet most of the files are stamped THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. CAUS hopes further legal action will uncover evaluations of the rest of the material.

What Ufologists have been referring to for years as "the '75 flap" has been verified by the documents that CAUS director Todd Zechel obtained in his separate FOI suit against the Air Force. His files chronicle a near infestation by UFOs of sensitive military bases in the continental

United States that year, including several pursuits by our planes and radar/ground observation returns. They also show the frequent flyovers in areas where atomic materials were either manufactured or stored.

In sifting through more than 1,000 CIA documents, I divided the material into two basic heaps: UFO sightings, theories, etc.; and miscellany, including bureaucratic repetitions, red tape, correspondence, and the occasional "revelatory document." It is this final, minuscule collection that may prove to be of most practical use to Ufologists.

If you get a large number of documents sent to you by the CIA, you're likely to get one or two totally unintended enclosures. The CIA sends off documents haphazardly? Definitely. CAUS got a four-page report on the 1950 resolutions of the All-China Store Clerk Workers' Conference.

Correspondence proves the agency lied as a matter of policy on UFOs. Referring to one overly insistent citizen, the agency's most prolific letter writer, a memo concludes: "... the extraordinarily noncommittal and evasive answer we were instructed to give Davidson was perhaps the only one possible if we were to avoid crossing up previous statements of our own, and other involved agencies, to this man." A draft of a letter sent to then-Senator Lyndon Johnson advises him precisely how to answer a constituent's queries about UFOs. The letter outlines an uninformative 11-line reply, telling Johnson to answer "along these lines" and "without direct reference to this agency."

There's evidence that the CIA regularly monitored private UFO groups while disclaiming any interest in them. File references were found to such groups as the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), to which several pages were devoted, and the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO), to which one agency official refers as "some crackpot group in the Midwest."

A February 1953 memo outlines a CIA policy that was never changed in



Double disk over Huascaren Range, Yungay, Peru.

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subsequent files. It emphasizes the dependence the agency was developing on information supplied by scientists who were members of UFO groups. As its example, the memo cites the findings submitted by Dr. Walter Riedel of the California Committee for Saucer Investigation.

In 1952 we were told that the Air Force had convened the Scientific Advisory Committee on Unidentified Flying Objects. We were given the names of five scientists who sat on the so-called Robertson Panel, named for its chairman, H. P. "Bob" Robertson. These names were put to the committee's final report—to this day rejected by most Ufologists as an outright deception of the American public. We were not told then that J. Allen Hynek had anything to do with the panel. People began much later to remember that he was an adviser to the panel.

But the files show that some people's recollections aren't quite so good. The panel officially consisted of Robertson, S. A. Goudsmit, Thornton Page, Louis Alvarez, and Lloyd Berkner. Yet, in a letter to agency assistant director Phil Strong, Goudsmit, now deceased, asks, "I wonder if my memory is failing. I do not remember at all that Lloyd Berkner was a member of our committee, but I do remember ... Hynek."

Has the Air Force's old Blue Book adviser always been the agency's scientist out in the Ufological cold? It is now acknowledged that it was the CIA, not the USAF, that set up the Robertson Panel. One of Hynek's right-hand investigators is Brad Ayers, a CIA hero of the early 1960s; and 1976 documents included in the batch, but heavily censored, suggest that Hynek's group, the Center for UFO Studies, includes someone who has been monitoring the group for the intelligence community. These revelations may do more than any others to shake up the UFO scene.

But, for the newly awakening, the files offer more worldwide, more officially monitored sightings than anything in recent times. I've characterized a few:

- A 1958 report of a sighting sent to the U.S. State Department by the British commissioner of the Cayman Islands.
- A sighting that same year by the Brazilian Navy that included photos not given to CAUS.
- Dozens of sightings along the Soviet border, from as far north as Finland to as far south as Afghanistan, during the 1950s.
- In 1959 the U.S. Navy intercepted two Soviet reports of UFO sightings over the Afghani-Soviet border. According to one, a UFO was seen exploding in midair. That incident was later connected to earth-tremor reports.
- A 1957 sighting report from the Finnish-Soviet border consisting of three long

pages, and two similar reports from the U.S. Army near the Afghan border. Some years earlier, a 1955 sighting report from an Afghan army officer had been passed on through U. S. intelligence channels.

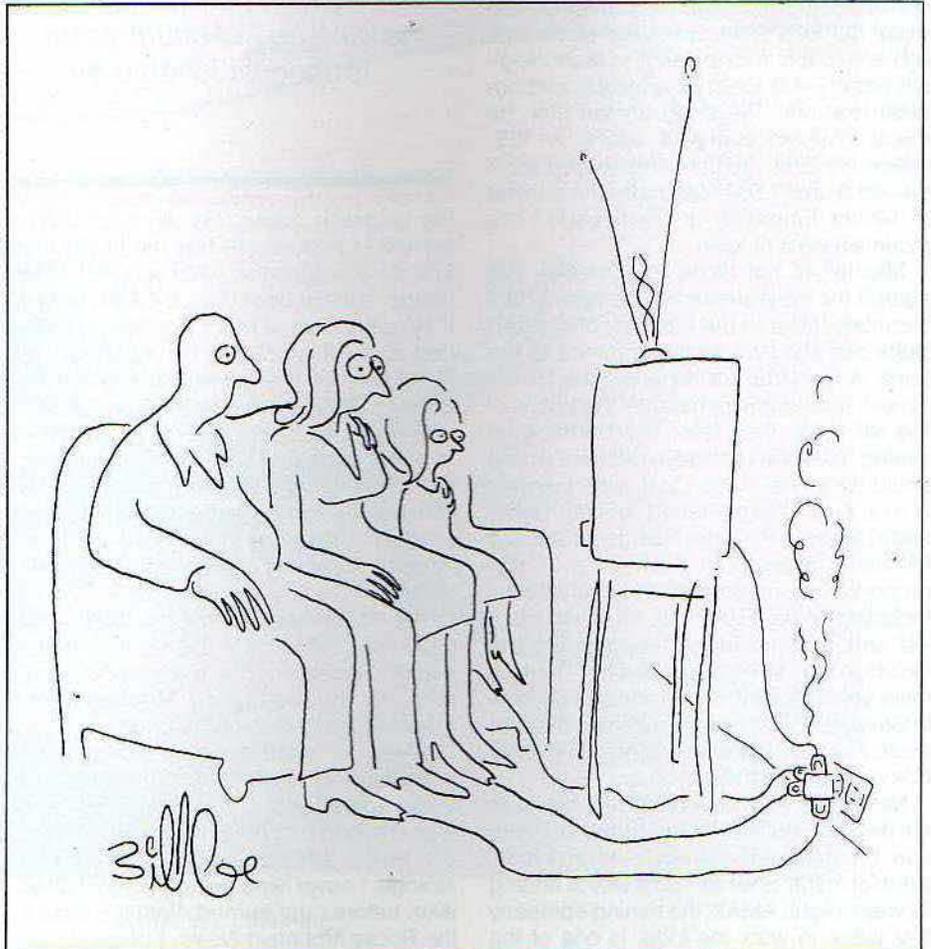
- Dozens of sightings in 1965 by an Argentinean weather team in the Antarctic.
- A two-page report, dated July 1960, on a sighting by a U.S. Army Geographical Specialist team in Northern Iran.
- A two-page report from Finland on four separate sightings of UFOs, one of which created a near-blinding light.
- An October 1962 report on a sighting from Czechoslovakia, six pages, five of which are blacked out; a report from within the USSR, three pages, with two blacked out; a summer of 1962 report on several sightings over Kamchatka in the eastern USSR, with sketches enclosed.
- Descriptions of color slides, also not included, taken by an Argentinean weatherman-astronomer, showing UFOs around an eclipse.
- A sighting by hundreds of witnesses in Czechoslovakia in 1965.
- A brilliant UFO over a Russian city in 1977 that shed light like rain on the town.
- The 1952 flap in North Africa, which elicited hundreds of reports.

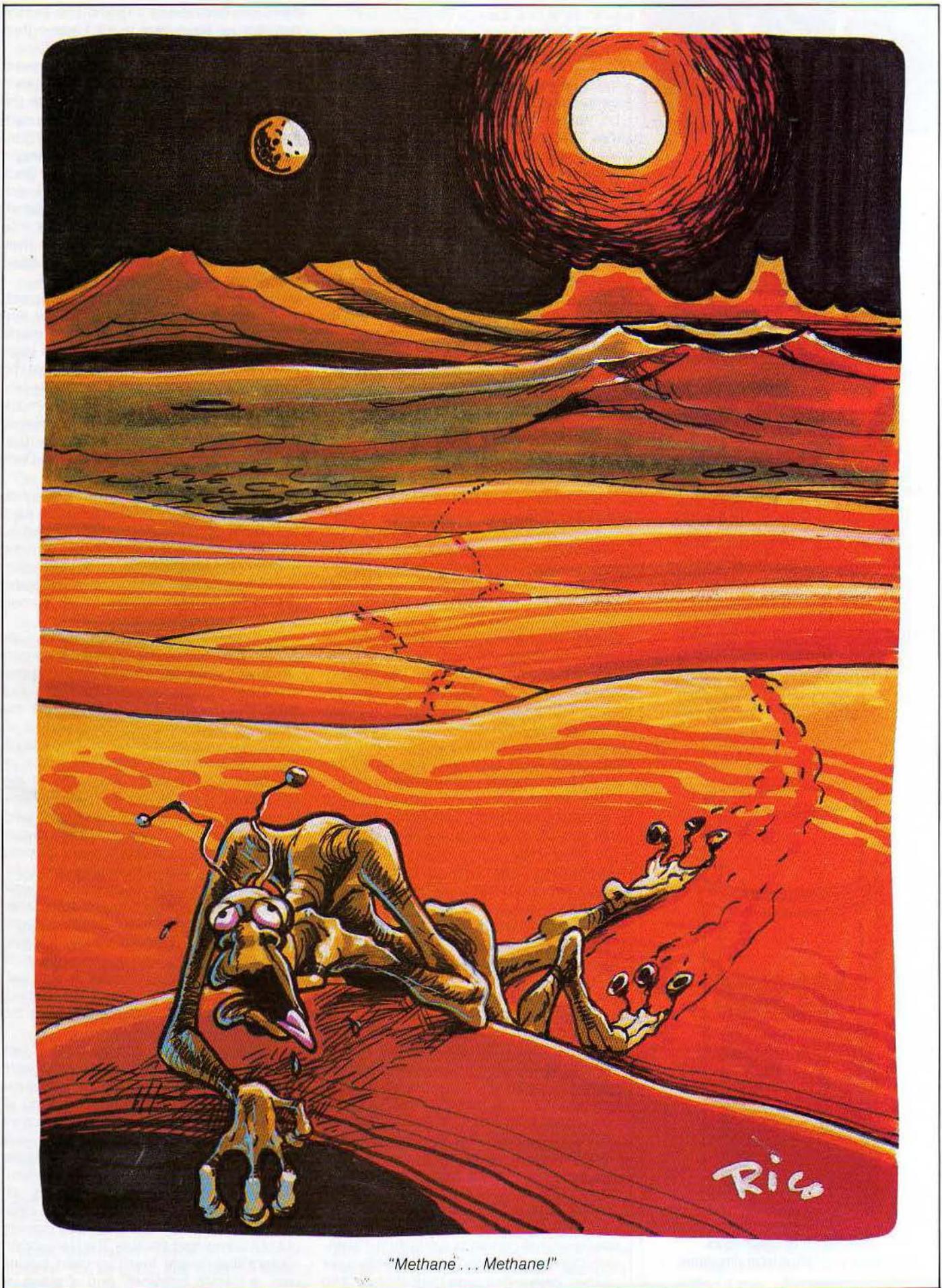
And perhaps the most cryptic snatch of incomplete data comes to us from the files of the Defense Intelligence Agency. Dated November 1968, this dossier contains three heavily edited legal-size pages of a report

on sightings over Laos and Thailand during the thick of our Southeast Asian adventure: "It is interesting to note that such unknown returns [armed-forces term for UFOs on radar] have been reported since 1965, and yet no unidentified aircraft has ever crashed or been physically observed so it can be identified. Friendly suppression forces have never shot down or hit those unknown intruders, whereas U.S. helicopters and aircraft in Vietnam and Laos have suffered many hits and losses."

The data are patchy because the CIA, responding to major flap-year public alarm, gathered information only during certain periods. For this reason, the early and late Fifties are disproportionately represented. The flap of 1975 is being analyzed by Zechel, who has the Air Force's records of those months. His book about those sightings will be published soon. Meanwhile, Gersten is trying to obtain the same information from the CIA.

But more "unevaluated information" is not enough. No one believes we scramble jets against things we never bother to evaluate. Are they, as the occasional Ufologist hints, afraid of panicking us with some terrifying analysis or revelation? Do they realize that they terrify some of us more by seeming not to know what to say? But that's probably it in a nutshell: They don't know what to make of the UFO thing. One thing they will have to accept: UFOs are real, and they won't go away. **DD**





"Methane . . . Methane!"