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JOHN MARTIN

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•Classified UFO documents lay in the dungeons and bins of every spy agency.•

## ANTI MATTER

By day, attorney Peter Gersten fights drug and murder raps for a host of Bronx defendants. But at night, from a modest storefront office in the shadows of the Bronx County Courthouse, he works on another sort of case: proving UFOs are technically advanced vehicles threatening our very existence.

Gersten developed his passion for UFOs as a boy, when he read every flying-saucer magazine he could get his hands on. Years later, as a lawyer, he subscribed to a UFO clipping service. When articles on UFO sightings from around the world poured in, he began to suspect that his childhood beliefs had some validity; so he wrote to numerous UFO organizations, volunteering his help.

Then, in September 1977, he received a surprise visit from W. Todd Zechel, research director for an Arizona-based group called Ground Saucer Watch. Zechel wanted some classified Central Intelligence Agency documents describing a 1952 UFO film made by an ex-manne; he thought a lawsuit could win him the right to see them. Gersten quickly agreed to represent Ground Saucer Watch, but he widened the lawsuit to include any UFO document in the CIA's possession. Using the Freedom of Information Act, he pried some 900 documents from dusty CIA bins in less than a year.

Reports on the 1952 film, Gersten explains, revealed nothing new. But information in some of the other documents seemed frightening. In October, November, and December 1975, for instance, military personnel across



the northern United States had reported unexplained objects hovering over nuclear-missile and bomber bases. One government analysis even suggested Americans deal with UFOs by developing a series of adequate defense measures "in a minimum amount of time."

Gersten soon learned that classified UFO documents lay in the dungeons of most spy agencies, including the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Again wielding the Free-

## UFO UPDATE

dom of Information Act, he procured 2,000 additional reports: In one, he discovered that UFOs over Kuwait had allegedly damaged the pumping system of the Kuwait Oil Company. Another document stated that Iranian pilots had lost control of their jets during an encounter with "inordinately maneuverable" UFOs. And still another told of "strange machines" near military bases in Algeria.

By 1980 Gersten had formed a group called Citizens Against UFO Secrecy. Its purpose: to obtain 233 documents still locked in government coffers. These efforts have recently been stymied, however, since the U.S. Court of Appeals decided that releasing more documents would expose American intelligence-gathering techniques.

Nevertheless, Gersten contends that he still has "enough information to prove that UFOs pose a threat." The government doesn't agree. But Gersten says, "We'll just let the people decide." He plans to blitz the media with his newest evidence this fall. — PAMELA WEINTRAUB