

## **ARE UFOs FOR REAL?**

# **SCIENTIST CHALLENGES MILITARY**

**A leading American astronomer is challenging the official United States military assertion that "flying saucers" — or unidentifiable flying objects (UFOs) — are imaginary.**

Dr J. A. Hynek, former astronomical consultant to the U. S. Air Force's UFO investigating team and now director of the Linheimer Astronomical Research Centre at Northwestern University in Chicago, has accused the Air Force of suppressing reports of UFO sightings that have not been explained.

**In a recently published book — “UFOs: A Scientific Enquiry” — Dr Hynek calls for a rigorous scientific probe into UFO reports submitted by two or more witnesses.**

He said in an interview that 90 per cent of UFO reports had been successfully explained, but deplored what he described as a curtain of ridicule obscuring the remainder.

As an example of how the Air Force drew its conclusions, Dr Hynek said an official recorder would “write ‘they saw Jupiter,’ when Jupiter wasn’t around, or ‘possibly aircraft,’” though no planes were in the area.

“Later on, they might transcribe their explanation to read just ‘aircraft,’ dropping the qualifier.”

fier.”

Unclassified Air Force files included data on strange lights seen at night, discs spotted in daylight, appearances that affected radar and damped small sources of electrical

energy, hoverings that scorched the ground or left other physical evidence and observations of humanoids, he said.

## Sightings

## dismissed

Some of the observations could be tested, such as electrical effects, to yield “hard data”, but the opportunities were allowed to disappear in an anti-scientific fashion by treating the reports as hallucinations or hoaxes.

Physicists had dismissed ball-lighting and pebble showers from meteorites in

from meteorites in much the same way, he said.

Dr Hynek himself has been widely lampooned in the American press for suggesting that UFO phenomena were caused by swamp gas.

One sarcastic cartoon showed an African village chief dismissing a plane flying overhead as "swamp gas".

In his own defence, he said he used the gas explanation only for some faint lights seen over Michigan

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swamps, and charged that reporters used the explanation to cover all possible sightings.

**Dr Hynek suggests a new, more objective approach to the mystery of UFOs, using statistical techniques to examine reports for patterns of similarity, and geographical and seasonal distribution**

**seasonal distribution around the world, a method that has never been used.**

He also wants central scientific stations where "citizens can go and make reports (and) be treated with dignity," with an international clearing house directed by the United Nations.

The more interest scientists have shown in the topic, he noted, the more the "crack pots" have turned away from it.

But one occurrence in Dr Hynek's book left the impression that an active research is being carried on by unknown investigators.

In one incident, the day after four men said they saw a mystery vehicle and "humanoids" in a North Dakota field, "one of the men was called out from work

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and led into the presence of men he

presence of men he had never seen before”.

“They asked to be taken to his home, where they examined the clothing he had worn the night before, especially his boots, and left without any further word.”

## Photographs

### confiscated

Asked to comment on this, Dr Hynek said: “In at least half a dozen cases, men who represented themselves as Air Force officials visited witnesses (to flying saucer phenomena) and confiscated photographs and negatives before the sighting was publicised.

“But I have a letter from the Air Force saying that the masqueraders definitely are not connected with them”

them.”

How the probers found out about the alleged events before the news broke remains a puzzle and “one of the aspects I don’t like,” Dr Hynek said.

**AAP.**