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Crossfire

Alien Territory

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MIKE KINSLEY
JOHN SUNUNU

GUESTS:
Dr. JOHN MACK, Author, "Abduction," Harvard University
PHILIP KLASS, "Aviation Week"

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ANNOUNCER: From Washington, Crossfire. On the left, Mike Kinsley. On the right, John Sununu. Tonight, Alien Territory. In the crossfire, Harvard Psychiatry Professor Dr. John Mack, author of *Abduction*; and Philip Klass, Contributing Editor to *Aviation Week and Space Technology* magazine.

MIKE KINSLEY: Good evening. Welcome to Crossfire. Crossfire doesn't usually traffic in stories about abductions by space aliens, but tales of UFO's are not usually endorsed by Harvard professors. John Mack is a professor of Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School and a prize-winning author, Pulitzer Prize-winning author. He set out to study people who believe they had been abducted by extraterrestrial beings in spaceships, but after working with many of them, Mack came to believe that psychiatry could not explain away their stories. He came to believe the stories were true. Mack's new book *Abduction* tells the stories of 13 of his patients. Mack's critics say he is not merely a fraud but a dangerous fraud. They say he implants these stories in his patients' minds through the power of suggestion and does potentially great harm to the fragile psyches in the process. Are space aliens landing in America? And if so, what is their position on health care reform? John?

JOHN SUNUNU: Dr. Mack, your publicist leads the news release on your book with this headline that says that you believe that three million people have been abducted in the United States by aliens. Is that an accurate description of your conclusion?

Dr. JOHN MACK, Author, "Abduction," Harvard University: There are many polls that have been done about this, and sometimes polls will tend to take an extreme when they publicize something. The polls range from several hundred thousand to several million Americans that have had these experiences. One of the difficulties with it is that memory is complicated in this situation, so sometimes a person will not remember their experience for many, many years, as in the case of two of the people in my book, and then something will trigger the memories. So if you ask them before the triggering experience, they will not remember. If you ask them afterwards, they will, and that would shift which side of the—

SUNUNU: Do you believe three million Americans have been abducted by aliens?

Dr. MACK: I don't know that. I don't know how many people have had these experiences.

SUNUNU: So a little of it is hyped for the book.

Dr. MACK: I don't know if it's hyped or it's not. What I believe about it is— the word believe has to be looked at here. I take seriously the stories of the people I've worked with, and there are a number of polls that have been got that range in them.

SUNUNU: One of the conclusions is that— I believe, if I've read the publicity about what you say correctly, is that you

feel that psychiatry cannot explain away the claims of these people. What has that got to do with reality?

Dr. MACK: Well, that's exactly what it does have to do with. You see, the reason— when I first started this, like many people— and when I heard about Bud Hopkins, an artist who took seriously the stories of people who reported being taken by alien beings into spacecraft, I thought there must be something wrong with this guy, and he must be talking about some new form of mental illness, but when I heard about the cases from him and then began to see them myself, and I've now worked with 90 people who have had these experiences, they don't fall into any psychiatric category. In other words, what these people report are real experiences, what are to them real experiences, and they are describing in great detail very similar accounts, which were not in the media until perhaps recently. They came forth very reluctantly. These are highly intricate narratives that are not in the public domain. These people do not have a mental illness, and the only thing that I know that behaves like that is some kind of real experience. Dreams are not like that. mental illness is not like that.

SUNUNU: Hallucinations are.

Dr. MACK: It doesn't behave like hallucinations—

SUNUNU: Why?

Dr. MACK: Hallucinations are— because hallucination is the product of some sort of mental condition. In other words, a hallucination occurs when there's a febrile, a feverish condition, or when someone is under the influence of a drug or has a mental illness, and this does not— these people— this is what I'm—

SUNUNU: You're arguing that any unstimulated strange statement by an individual suggests that there is a reality behind the strange statement?

Dr. MACK: And experiential reality. You see, this does not behave like a hallucination. In other words, a lot of people who are not clinically trained, Carl Sagan, others, say, "Well, this has got to be a hallucination," because it doesn't fit our reality. That doesn't make a clinical argument. A clinical argument is based on your knowledge of people, and the reason that I've taken the stand that I have is because I've examined these people carefully, and as a clinician, this does not behave like an hallucination. Now, it's striking to me that the people that are so quick to call this an hallucination are not people who actually work with patients.

KINSLEY: All right.

SUNUNU: Any skepticism from your colleagues at Harvard?

Dr. MACK: There's some skepticism, there's a lot of interest. It's the whole range of responses you can imagine.

KINSLEY: Let's get Philip Klass in here, and by the way, Mr. Klass, this is not a closed book exam. You don't have to hide your notes. We've all got them right here on the table. Let me ask you. John asked, what's the connection between psychiatry and this? It seems to me it's rather obvious. Either these people really were abducted or they've got to be a little bit nuts, don't they?

PHILIP KLASS, "Aviation Week": No, no. We're not— these are not crazy people.

KINSLEY: They're not?

Mr. KLASS: No, suggestible, yes. Let me— we've had a recent example. About a year or so ago, a man, I think in the state of Washington, reported finding a hypodermic needle in a Pepsi can. Within several weeks, 50 people—and he became a TV celebrity, of course. Within several weeks, 50 people, more than 50, all around the country said, "Oh, yes, I, too, found a hypodermic needle."

KINSLEY: They were motivated by the possibility of litigation, I think.

Mr. KLASS: Well, not necessarily.

KINSLEY: Who are going to sue if a space alien abducts you?

Mr. KLASS: Well, but the fact is that many of these people have been brainwashed. Television is responsible for a large part of this brainwashing, in my opinion: 95 percent of the TV shows dealing with UFO's, dealing with abductions are loaded, 95 percent of the time they're promoting belief, and there are suggestible people. We know that television commercials are intended and do influence what people drink, what kind of cars they buy, and what they think.

KINSLEY: Yes, but, Mr. Klass, if someone watched a TV commercial and goes out and buys a Coca-Cola, that might be suggested behavior but that is rational behavior. Surely if someone watches a TV show and becomes convinced not that— not even that others have been abducted by space alien, but they themselves have been abducted by space aliens—

Mr. KLASS: Well, Michael, this is—

KINSLEY: Can a rational person come to believe that?

Mr. KLASS: Yes, yes, because all of us like attention, and many of these, not all, but many of the subjects that I have met are people who are little nobodies, who would never be invited to appear on a national TV show and now, by telling this kind of a tale, they're suddenly celebrities.

KINSLEY: But do you think they're making it up, or do you think that they really believe it's true?

Mr. KLASS: Part of it may be made up, but let's talk about some facts. John likes to talk about the similarity. A recent report on an analysis of 95 abductees' tales, they were asked, what was the E.T. wearing? 37 percent said they were wearing cloaks or capes.

Dr. MACK: What's this study now?

Mr. KLASS: This is published in the *Mufon UFO Journal*. sp?] Twenty-three percent said they were wearing jumpsuits or coveralls, 18 percent said the E.T.'s wore wet-suits—

KINSLEY: What's the point?

Mr. KLASS: —and 22 percent said they were naked.

Dr. MACK: What's the point? What's the point you're making?

KINSLEY: They were naked sometimes, they were wearing jumpsuits sometimes.

Mr. KLASS: But John says they're all similar stories.

Dr. MACK: I didn't say they were identical. There are minor variations.

Mr. KLASS: Oh, minor variations?

Dr. MACK: Let me ask you a couple of questions here.

First of all, what is your clinical evidence or basis for saying that these people are suggestible? In fact, when you try to suggest anything to a person who's had these experiences it doesn't work. You ask them, what color is the hair? to trick them, some of them say, no hair. They know. They will say, "I know what I know." You can't suggest anything to them, and on what basis, do you say that this is a product of suggestion? Also you say these people are nobodies. That's just like character assassination. We had a man who has been—

Mr. KLASS: It—

Dr. MACK: Wait a minute, Phil. We had a man who's been going around with me, who is a major health executive from Indiana. He's not a nobody. He's been on television here in Washington—

Mr. KLASS: Let him step forward.

Dr. MACK: He has stepped forward. He's been on television here in Washington under his own name.

Mr. KLASS: What was his name?

Dr. MACK: David Jones.

Mr. KLASS: Oh, he is a major executive?

Dr. MACK: In Indiana he has had—

SUNUNU: John—

Dr. MACK: He has been in the White House, he has met with President Reagan, and he is openly declaring that he is an abductee.

SUNUNU: But let's follow that line of thought. If the three million figure is correct, it means about 1 percent of the Americans have been— of the current population has been abducted. If the 700,000 is, it's about one quarter of 1 percent. In any case, it's about one out of 100 or one out of 400. That means over the last few years at least one congressman, statistically speaking, should have been taken.

Dr. MACK: If you were a congressman—

SUNUNU: Are there any?

Dr. MACK: John, if you were a congressman, would you admit that you had been abducted? I've talked with airline pilots who have been abducted, they won't admit it. They won't admit it—

SUNUNU: So you're saying there are members of Congress who—

Dr. MACK: —because they don't want to lose their jobs.

SUNUNU: —probably have been abducted who won't admit it?

Dr. MACK: It's possible, it's very possible. We know some quite high ranking people in this country who have— we've been working with—

SUNUNU: John, how many faculty members at Harvard?

Dr. MACK: Again, you think a faculty member would come forward and admit it? I know some, I know some.

SUNUNU: That have been abducted?

Dr. MACK: Yes, I knew.

SUNUNU: I see.

KINSLEY: Isn't— I think the point— you're not being quite fair to Professor Mack's point about the similarities between the story. So they wear different clothes. The basic structure of these stories is the same.

Mr. KLASS: Why? Because they have seen it on television. They've read it in books. They've seen it in movies, but

there are great differences. Some of the people who say the E.T.'s have claws like lobster claws. Some say they have three fingers, no thumbs. Some say they have webbed hands, and incidentally there is no report — maybe John can fill us in — to my knowledge of any of these “abductees” having to go to the toilet while they were being abducted. None of them to my knowledge report, “Yes, I had to go to the toilet, and they took me to a men’s room or a ladies’ room.”

KINSLEY: You want to deal with that one before I move on?

Dr. MACK: Yes, sure. I have occasions where people couldn’t hold it anymore and went on the ship. You think we’re going to publish that?

SUNUNU: What’s the single most important common fact that you think suggests that this is real?

Dr. MACK: I’m talking about it being experientially real. OK, what’s—

SUNUNU: What does that mean? Just tell us—

Dr. MACK: The basic story is that people from their homes, from a car, there was a case of children from a playground, experience of being taken up on a beam of blue light—

SUNUNU: Always blue?

Dr. MACK: Usually blue, it can vary in color.

SUNUNU: Is that just because *Encounters of the Third Kind* had a blue light in it?

Dr. MACK: No, *Encounters of the Third Kind* was based on what was told about the experience already known.

SUNUNU: I see.

Dr. MACK: It was not the other way around.

SUNUNU: The chicken and the egg.

Dr. MACK: Let me say something about this business of people trying to get attention.

SUNUNU: Yes, single fact—

Dr. MACK: Just to go back to your point about attention. It’s very difficult, until recently, to get these people to even talk to anybody about it, to admit it, because they tend to get ridiculed by people like you who put them down, try to make fools of them. So it’s not true that they seek attention. They gain nothing from this.

Mr. KLASS: John, why is it that I’ve never appeared on a talk show on UFO abductions where the host has said, “I’m terribly sorry, we were unable to get any abductee to go public.”

KINSLEY: I’m sorry that’s—

Dr. MACK: I can tell you—

Mr. KLASS: There are always three or four or five—

Dr. MACK: —how difficult it is for me to get somebody to talk about it.

Mr. KLASS: —on the show.

KINSLEY: There are four or five people on any category you could dream up, Phil, who are always willing to be television. I’m ashamed to say that that’s how this works.

Dr. MACK: It’s particularly difficult in this situation because they tend to get criticized, humiliated, told they’re little nobodies, put down personally, and that makes it very difficult for people to speak up about it.

SUNUNU: Professor Mack, we’ll be back in a minute, and

when we return, we’ll ask why no one has ever brought back a souvenir from one of these three million encounters.

[Commercial break]

SUNUNU: Welcome back to Crossfire. Professor John Mack of Harvard has written a book supporting the claims of those who say they have had a real encounter with extraterrestrial aliens. He’s here tonight explaining why that’s so, and here suggesting that not only is that ridiculous, but dangerous, is Philip Klass, Contributing Editor of *Aviation Week and Space Technology* magazine.

KINSLEY: Professor Mack, *Time* magazine this week quotes a woman who says she went to you, making up—consciously thinking you were a fraud, making up stories about space aliens. She had a story about visiting Kennedy and Khrushchev in a spaceship, sitting in Khrushchev’s lap, he was crying and so on and so forth. She has it all tape-recorded, and that you fell for it completely. Now, is that true?

Dr. MACK: First of all, the woman— even though this person has waived her anonymity as a patient and waived patient rights in that way, I still have to be ethical, and I can’t talk about her. I can talk about why someone might do that. I don’t know whether this is a made-up story on her part. This is a person that I worked with in good faith. Why she makes these charges, she’s become— she’s down in North Carolina, she’s moved away, she’s become alienated from the support group she had. Why she turns to attack, to smear, because—

KINSLEY: Well, wait, do you believe that she really was abducted by aliens, even though she says she wasn’t and she made it all up?

Dr. MACK: I’m not prepared to say I can accept that story that she said that she made it all up, because a lot of people don’t want to believe this. When they get away from the people that they’re— the person that they’re working with, they may deny the whole experience. Many of the people that have had these experiences will deny it.

Mr. KLASS: So you believe the story is true about her sitting on Khrushchev’s lap in a flying saucer?

Dr. MACK: No, I didn’t include— some people will report things that you simply don’t rely on, and she’s— there’s not one word from this person in the book, and I don’t want to get into her unreliability at this point. I mean, I think the article itself demonstrates that.

KINSLEY: How?

Dr. MACK: And as far as accepting that story or not, that’s absolutely not true.

KINSLEY: How does it demonstrate her unreliability?

Dr. MACK: Because to come up with stories like that— I mean, that’s not something that I would place any credence about, and you have to make— in this kind of thing, because you’re subjected to the kind of attacks that someone like Phil Klass will say, you have to be very careful about the kind of material you use.

KINSLEY: So it’s not true that you indicated to her clearly that you believed her story about Khrushchev and Kennedy?

Dr. MACK: Not at all, not a bit true. This is something that she apparently, for reasons that only she knows, made

up and the people I work— my colleagues know that I didn't accept this story and the claims— I want to hear about this souvenir thing.

SUNUNU: Here. let me go to that.

Dr. MACK: I want to get to your souvenir thing.

SUNUNU: How comes there's nothing tangible that we can run a chemical analysis on, a physical analysis on?

Dr. MACK: John, in all fairness to you and to what's behind that question, there is something so kind of humanly culturally egocentric about that question. To assume that something that enters our world that may have some subtlety that asks us to look beyond the usual way we know to something else is going to reduce itself to our Disneyland mentality here—

SUNUNU: No, I'm arguing, wouldn't somebody that was abducted have enough curiosity to pick up the equivalent of a matchbook or a towel from the men's room or something that was there?

KINSLEY: A little bottle of shampoo or something like that?

SUNUNU: Something.

Dr. MACK: I mean, that would suggest that this whole thing is going to be just like us, that there cannot be another intelligence or perhaps this might not be possible.

SUNUNU: Something tangible to be analyzed.

Dr. MACK: It's possible there's something in this universe that doesn't operate just, you know, exactly like our amusement parks here.

Mr. KLASS: What about a piece of knowledge? Now, these people claim that the E.T.'s communicate with them with— via telepathy and so on. If one of these people were to come back and say, "You know, an E.T. told me that there is a tiny planet smaller than Pluto, further out, that we don't yet know about, and if we will point our telescopes at this part of the sky tonight at midnight we'll see it," and many astronomers—

KINSLEY: How about something more useful like what the stock market's going to do next?

Mr. KLASS: Well, that would be asking a bit much, but— and we'd point our telescopes there, and lo and behold, here is this planet. That would make a believer out of me.

SUNUNU: Or something easier, saying that "Our ship will be flying past these coordinates, and if you have CNN, Mr. Turner's network, watch it, CNN will record for the first time an extraterrestrial flight."

Dr. MACK: You know, there is something useful that they're teaching us. They're teaching us that just possibly we are not the highest form of intelligence in the universe, and I think a lot of the reason that this gets debunked and why—

SUNUNU: That's why they're not taking congressmen.

Dr. MACK: One of the reason that this gets debunked is because this shows that there just may be some other intelligences out there that are not simply—

Mr. KLASS: I hope there is.

Dr. MACK: —a projection of Phil Klass' brain.

SUNUNU: If they're that intelligent, why don't they interact with us through these abductions in such a way that we can—

Dr. MACK: Well, you know what we'd do? When anything unusual, the slightest bit unusual comes along that's a little different than us, what do we do? We shoot at it. Right? That wouldn't be— that is the way we respond to anything different. It just may be telling in our arrogance as human beings that there may be some other intelligences out there that have something to offer. They teach us a lot about ourselves. They may open us to a larger world. That's possible, too.

KINSLEY: Go ahead, and I have a question for you.

Mr. KLASS: Scientists like Carl Sagan are searching for that life. We're training large, giant radio telescopes, hoping to hear signals. We all hope, I hope that there's intelligent life out there. There's nothing more exciting.

Dr. MACK: Phil, let me ask you. Can you conceive of the possibility, just for a moment, that another intelligence might not just be like us? It might not have the same—

Mr. KLASS: Exactly.

Dr. MACK: —crude technologies of sending radio waves and sending them back. It just might come in in a different way—

Mr. KLASS: Well, and as a matter of fact—

SUNUNU: But they would certainly have everything we have plus more, and therefore should be able to interact with us that way.

Mr. KLASS: And, John—

Dr. MACK: They might just be inviting us to stretch a little bit beyond on our culture, narrow way of looking at things.

KINSLEY: All right.

Mr. KLASS: Now, some of the E.T.'s, some of your subjects—

Dr. MACK: Michael, you're supposed to be on my side. What are you doing?

KINSLEY: I've been captured by these aliens—

Dr. MACK: Yeah, what are you doing?

Mr. KLASS: John, some of your E.T.'s report— I'm sorry, some of your subjects report the E.T.'s look like owls.

Dr. MACK: They have very large eyes. So what?

Mr. KLASS: I think some of them report they look like lizards.

Dr. MACK: So?

Mr. KLASS: Isn't that right?

Dr. MACK: So, what's your point? They're different—

Mr. KLASS: And some report they look like giant praying mantises. Isn't it strange that if there's intelligent life out there that they look exactly like our lizards, that they look exactly like our praying mantises?

KINSLEY: Come on, Phil. Even I can handle that one. You have to describe by analogy to what you know. You can't describe things without—

Mr. KLASS: Why not say a praying mantis with three heads and six feet or—

KINSLEY: Let me ask—

Dr. MACK: Phil, what you're saying basically, if this does not conform to your notion of reality, therefore it can't be. So, you know, you will go around to UFO conferences all over this world saying, people report UFO's. You say, "It's not there, show me the evidence, show me this object that

came off of it," but if it doesn't fit your definition of evidence in our kind of antiquated Western. "I'm here, you're there," physical notions then it doesn't exist at all. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. KLASS: What I'm saying is that our scientific methodology—

Dr. MACK: Wait, science with— that's theology, the new theology, science, is that what you mean?

Mr. KLASS: No, no—

SUNUNU: It's better than the old theology of psychiatry.

Dr. MACK: Well, maybe just opening us to some larger way of knowing that isn't just, "I'm here, you're there," we'll have an instrument, radio waves that'll measure it. Maybe we can expand the way we know to include more of our consciousness. Isn't that possible?

Mr. KLASS: Well, yeah—

KINSLEY: I've got to cut you off at that point. Thank you, Mr. Klass. Thank you, Professor Mack. Unless John and I are abducted, we will be back in a couple of minutes.

[Commercial break]

SUNUNU: Mike, I guess I should apologize a bit for being as skeptical as I am, but it's awfully tough for an engineer to really believe that these kinds of things happen. Perhaps it's just no more than some people who are sincere in their beliefs thinking something that really didn't go on.

KINSLEY: You're being amazingly tolerant, John. I mean, polls show that three or four million people believe they've had some kind of— three or four million Americans believe they've had some kind of contact with extraterrestrial aliens. Either it's really happened or there are three or four million people who are a little bit nuts. I know which one I think.

SUNUNU: And, Michael, there's three times that many who believe in ghosts. If that were— if there were anything to this, there would be a blue beam come down and take us both out of here tonight.

KINSLEY: From the left, I'm Mike Kinsley. Good night for Crossfire.

SUNUNU: And from the right, I'm John Sununu. Join us again tomorrow night for another edition of Crossfire.

KINSLEY: *PrimeNews* is next with the news from around the universe. Let's find out what's in the headlines.

LINDEN SOLES, PrimeNews: Hello, I'm Linden Soles, back here on Earth. A White House first as American Indian leaders hear promises of sovereignty recognition but wonder why their health funding has gone up in smoke. And if the coach potato won't go to the gym, the gym can come to the proverbial C.P. Hide the potato chips, *PrimeNews* is next.