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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:19,000

November 2004 off the coast of Southern California, the radar operators on the US's Princeton begin to see objects coming essentially from space.

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00:00:19,000 --> 00:00:25,000

And as I come up I can see them as these crossing in front of me, it starts to accelerate, gets right on my nose and disappears.

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00:00:25,000 --> 00:00:30,000

This particular object was not following any of our rules.

4

00:00:30,000 --> 00:00:33,000

Like what the f*** is that?

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00:00:33,000 --> 00:00:36,000

Like we're seeing something for the first time.

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00:00:36,000 --> 00:00:40,000

We don't know if it's a threat, we don't even know what it is.

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00:00:40,000 --> 00:00:43,000

We don't know what we don't know.

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00:00:43,000 --> 00:00:45,000

Look at that thing!

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00:00:45,000 --> 00:00:51,000

These unidentified flying phenomenon or objects, you know, I don't know what they are.

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00:00:52,000 --> 00:00:56,000

But we've established one thing, they exist.

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00:00:56,000 --> 00:01:00,000

Our pilots have been seeing these things for decades.

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00:01:00,000 --> 00:01:03,000

Their sightings go all the way back to the 40s and 50s and 60s.

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00:01:03,000 --> 00:01:07,000

We have a report of an unidentified aircraft south of the field.

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00:01:07,000 --> 00:01:10,000

There have been hundreds of sightings of Westchester, Dutchess, and Putnam counties.

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00:01:10,000 --> 00:01:14,000

Anything that enters an airspace that's not supposed to be there is a threat.

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00:01:14,000 --> 00:01:20,000

There's a lot of people who are very passionate about this issue and they just want people to take it seriously as they should.

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00:01:20,000 --> 00:01:25,000

The military and the government basically decided on a policy of shaming.

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00:01:25,000 --> 00:01:28,000

The witnesses were very afraid of being ridiculed.

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00:01:28,000 --> 00:01:30,000

They think you're a nut.

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00:01:30,000 --> 00:01:33,000

Tell you the truth, that's just what they figure you are.

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00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:35,000

We needed to remove the stigma.

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00:01:35,000 --> 00:01:40,000

Republicans are just as curious as Democrats when it comes to these matters.

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00:01:40,000 --> 00:01:44,000

It used to be that the burden of proof was on the true believer.

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00:01:44,000 --> 00:01:47,000

They saw something prove it.

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00:01:47,000 --> 00:01:51,000

Now the burden of proof has shifted to the government.

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00:01:51,000 --> 00:01:58,000

Now they have to prove that they don't come from perhaps another universe beyond ours.

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00:02:01,000 --> 00:02:03,000

We get reports every night.

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00:02:03,000 --> 00:02:07,000

I don't know what's happening. It looks like they're not standing right around it.

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00:02:07,000 --> 00:02:19,000

Yes, it came from outer space to fill the world with terror to bring you unforgettable suspects.

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00:02:19,000 --> 00:02:27,000

When you hear the term UFO, I think a lot of people think of little green men and Elvis on the mothership and tinfoil hats.

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00:02:27,000 --> 00:02:29,000

Where did it come from?

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00:02:29,000 --> 00:02:38,000

When in reality what we're talking about are real objects that are being encountered over controlled US airspace.

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00:02:38,000 --> 00:02:41,000

In some cases very sensitive locations.

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00:02:41,000 --> 00:02:46,000

Performing in ways that frankly we can't understand.

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00:02:47,000 --> 00:02:52,000

Honestly, we have video footage of UAPs, unidentified aerial phenomena.

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00:02:52,000 --> 00:02:54,000

My gosh!

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00:02:55,000 --> 00:02:59,000

They're going against the wind. The wind's 100.5 knots west.

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00:02:59,000 --> 00:03:00,000

Oh, all things dude.

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00:03:00,000 --> 00:03:03,000

More and more things that we can't identify.

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00:03:03,000 --> 00:03:08,000

So we need to know what it is. That is necessary for national security.

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00:03:08,000 --> 00:03:11,000

There's a whole fleet of them. Look on the ASA.

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00:03:11,000 --> 00:03:20,000

Might this be from the Russians, the Chinese government, or another hostile nation, a non-state actor?

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00:03:20,000 --> 00:03:25,000

Or are these aircraft otherworldly?

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00:03:25,000 --> 00:03:29,000

Are these beings from another galaxy or universe?

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00:03:29,000 --> 00:03:33,000

These are questions that have to be answered.

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00:03:33,000 --> 00:03:36,000

I think the best way to characterize it is we're vulnerable.

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00:03:36,000 --> 00:03:42,000

It's a vulnerability and that vulnerability could be exploited, could be massively exploited.

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00:03:42,000 --> 00:03:46,000

So that has to be a national security concern.

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00:03:47,000 --> 00:03:52,000

We've been looking at this topic for the last 70 years as a country.

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00:03:52,000 --> 00:03:59,000

We have substantiated reports of UAP activity from at least World War II.

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00:04:01,000 --> 00:04:09,000

We have received and analyzed between 1 and 2,000 reports that have come to us from all kinds of sources.

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00:04:09,000 --> 00:04:22,000

You're not taught this in history class, but we had a phenomenal series of UFO sightings directly over the nation's capital in July 1952 on two successive weekends.

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00:04:22,000 --> 00:04:37,000

The Air Force's interest in this problem has been due to our feeling of an obligation to identify anything in the air that may have the possibility of threat or menace to the United States.

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00:04:38,000 --> 00:04:44,000

The American people wanted answers, and unfortunately the Air Force chose to obfuscate.

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00:04:44,000 --> 00:04:51,000

Our critics continually charge that the United States Air Force is withholding information from the general public.

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00:04:51,000 --> 00:04:58,000

This is absolutely untrue. We are not hiding anything. We have nothing to hide.

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00:04:58,000 --> 00:05:03,000

So in the early 1970s, the government concluded its investigation into UFOs.

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00:05:03,000 --> 00:05:14,000

As a result of that, there was this quiet period. This point where the U.S. government had washed its hands of the topic, and that occurred for several decades.

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00:05:14,000 --> 00:05:17,000

Or at least that's what we were led to believe.

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00:05:18,000 --> 00:05:28,000

In fact, in 2008, I was approached by a couple representatives from a little small obscure office somewhere in the Pentagon.

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00:05:28,000 --> 00:05:34,000

That office was called the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program, ATIP.

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00:05:34,000 --> 00:05:40,000

The individuals asked me if I would be part of an effort, which quite literally looked at UFOs.

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00:05:41,000 --> 00:05:49,000

ATIP was the deliberate and purposeful study of unidentified aerial vehicles that were being encountered in controlled U.S. airspace.

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00:05:51,000 --> 00:05:57,000

People asked me, well, why you, Lou? And as it was explained to me, it was because of my background.

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00:05:59,000 --> 00:06:07,000

I'm a career counterintelligence special agent. Many of my assignments were overseas, initially in the Latin American hemisphere.

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00:06:07,000 --> 00:06:12,000

And then later on, after September 11th, over in Afghanistan in the Middle East.

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00:06:14,000 --> 00:06:19,000

I took an oath many, many years ago to defend this country from all enemies, foreign and domestic.

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00:06:19,000 --> 00:06:23,000

And that's why I accepted the offer to join ATIP.

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00:06:24,000 --> 00:06:29,000

I approached this job the same way I did every other job I ever had in intelligence.

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00:06:29,000 --> 00:06:35,000

The exact same methodologies that we used to hunt terrorists, we were using to hunt UFOs.

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00:06:36,000 --> 00:06:42,000

The sources of information that was collected was primarily through Department of Defense and military assets.

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00:06:44,000 --> 00:06:50,000

Think of fighter aircraft and military eyewitnesses. We did not engage the public.

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00:06:51,000 --> 00:07:00,000

These pilots are not only trained observers, but they are some of the best aircraft pilots on the planet, operating some of the most sophisticated weapons systems on the planet.

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00:07:01,000 --> 00:07:10,000

When they're telling you that they are encountering something that they cannot describe, that impacts our national security and our ability to respond to a perceived threat.

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00:07:10,000 --> 00:07:18,000

And so when they are encountering these objects, we have to take their testimony seriously.

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00:07:19,000 --> 00:07:31,000

Imagine something that had the ability to fly in space, underwater and in our atmosphere at 13,000 miles an hour and change directions instantly.

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00:07:31,000 --> 00:07:37,000

We fly the SR-71 at 3,200 miles an hour.

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00:07:37,000 --> 00:07:42,000

If you wanted to take a right-hand turn, it would take you roughly half the state of Ohio to do it.

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00:07:43,000 --> 00:07:48,000

And yet what we are seeing are objects that can do 90-degree turns instantly.

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00:07:48,000 --> 00:07:55,000

And when I'm talking about speeds of 3,200 miles an hour, they've been clocked at over 13,000.

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00:07:55,000 --> 00:07:58,000

The question arises, how is that possible?

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00:08:01,000 --> 00:08:11,000

On the Armed Services Committee, the one thing I did become aware of that I was very concerned about is that members of our Armed Forces have come forward over many years.

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00:08:13,000 --> 00:08:18,000

With reports of unidentified aerial phenomenon that they actually captured.

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00:08:18,000 --> 00:08:24,000

And instead of that information being well received, it's often been denigrated.

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00:08:25,000 --> 00:08:31,000

By and large, most of the data was not even filed or saved or reported.

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00:08:31,000 --> 00:08:36,000

The information that was stored did not go to a central authority.

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00:08:36,000 --> 00:08:38,000

That's not acceptable.

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00:08:38,000 --> 00:08:45,000

And if we don't know what it is, it's not an appropriate response to say, well then let's not look at it.

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00:08:45,000 --> 00:08:48,000

Or let's not admit it's there.

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00:08:48,000 --> 00:08:51,000

And so I wanted to look into this further.

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00:08:55,000 --> 00:08:59,000

So is that like an adrenaline junkie? Is that what you call yourself?

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00:08:59,000 --> 00:09:03,000

I don't say I'm an adrenaline junkie, but I like fast cars and flying jets are pretty cool.

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00:09:03,000 --> 00:09:06,000

I mean, I think it's the greatest job on the planet.

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00:09:07,000 --> 00:09:12,000

My name is David Fraver. I'm a retired Navy commander, super hornet pilot.

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00:09:12,000 --> 00:09:15,000

I flew for 18 years for the United States Navy.

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00:09:18,000 --> 00:09:22,000

July 1969, I was with my mom watching Neil Armstrong walk on the moon.

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00:09:26,000 --> 00:09:33,000

And I was fascinated with space and my mom said they were all former military pilots and about from that point on,

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00:09:33,000 --> 00:09:39,000

I had this goal that I was going to fly tactical aircraft somewhere in the United States military.

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00:09:48,000 --> 00:09:51,000

I got some pilots that I worry about.

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00:09:51,000 --> 00:09:57,000

The first thing you don't want to lose anybody in number two, the airplanes are pretty expensive and it's tax dollars.

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00:09:57,000 --> 00:10:03,000

In November of 2004, we were going to work with the USS Princeton and we were flying.

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00:10:03,000 --> 00:10:05,000

We're training our aircrew.

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00:10:05,000 --> 00:10:07,000

Stand by for work and commanding officer.

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00:10:07,000 --> 00:10:11,000

As Alex was flying the other plane, the Princeton came up and said,

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00:10:11,000 --> 00:10:14,000

Hey sir, we're going to hold on training today.

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00:10:14,000 --> 00:10:19,000

So he said, hey, we have a real world vector and they turned us off to the west.

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00:10:21,000 --> 00:10:25,000

It goes to, oh, real world. Maybe we're going to intercept some drug runners.

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00:10:25,000 --> 00:10:32,000

We were flying in a tactical combat spread formation to aircraft.

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00:10:32,000 --> 00:10:35,000

Each aircraft had two aircrew.

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00:10:36,000 --> 00:10:41,000

As the radar hits on the USS Princeton scope, start to march towards each other.

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00:10:41,000 --> 00:10:45,000

They get so close that they can't differentiate them and that's called a merge plot.

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00:10:45,000 --> 00:10:50,000

And a merge plot is when you would expect to merge with this other aircraft.

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00:10:50,000 --> 00:10:54,000

And if you're in a combat situation, that's obviously a very tense moment.

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00:10:56,000 --> 00:10:58,000

So when you do that, you start looking outside.

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00:10:58,000 --> 00:11:03,000

So we're kind of doing this, looking around to see where it's at because it's somewhere around you and you don't know.

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00:11:03,000 --> 00:11:05,000

And I looked down and I go, what is that?

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00:11:05,000 --> 00:11:11,000

Close your eyes and imagine a long cylindrical white object with rounded ends.

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00:11:11,000 --> 00:11:15,000

Roughly 40 feet long that looked like a giant tic-tac.

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00:11:16,000 --> 00:11:19,000

It was white, pure white.

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00:11:19,000 --> 00:11:24,000

It had no windows, no wings, no visual signs of propulsion.

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00:11:25,000 --> 00:11:27,000

And this thing was going like this.

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00:11:27,000 --> 00:11:30,000

And I describe it as like if you put a ping pong ball and it was bouncing off a wall.

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00:11:33,000 --> 00:11:37,000

This particular object was not following any of our rules.

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00:11:37,000 --> 00:11:40,000

It didn't have a turn radius that we would expect.

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00:11:40,000 --> 00:11:43,000

It didn't have a period to accelerate and decelerate.

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00:11:43,000 --> 00:11:49,000

It just seemed to zip so quickly that it was again really disorienting, really confusing for us.

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00:11:53,000 --> 00:11:56,000

David said it was the WTF moment.

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00:11:56,000 --> 00:11:57,000

Yeah, yeah.

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00:11:57,000 --> 00:12:02,000

We're definitely some WTFs on the radio.

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00:12:02,000 --> 00:12:06,000

Not in a scared way, but like what the f*** is that?

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00:12:06,000 --> 00:12:09,000

Like we're seeing something for the first time.

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00:12:10,000 --> 00:12:13,000

You know, some people go, what is that? And they run.

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00:12:13,000 --> 00:12:15,000

And then some people see it. What is that? And they're curious.

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00:12:15,000 --> 00:12:17,000

They want to get closer and closer.

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00:12:18,000 --> 00:12:20,000

I wanted to get closer, see what it was.

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00:12:21,000 --> 00:12:27,000

My lead, Commander David Fraver, he says I'm in, which means that he's engaging with this thing.

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00:12:29,000 --> 00:12:32,000

We're going around. We get to about the 12 o'clock position.

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00:12:32,000 --> 00:12:34,000

And this thing's still pointing north-south.

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00:12:34,000 --> 00:12:39,000

The tic-tac goes and turns and starts coming up.

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00:12:39,000 --> 00:12:40,000

So now it's mirroring me.

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00:12:40,000 --> 00:12:43,000

Whatever it was was aware that we were there.

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00:12:43,000 --> 00:12:46,000

And as I come up, I can see him as he's crossing in front of me.

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00:12:46,000 --> 00:12:49,000

It starts to accelerate, gets right on my nose and disappears.

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00:12:51,000 --> 00:12:54,000

For something to come off the surface of the ocean like it was moving around,

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00:12:54,000 --> 00:12:57,000

to be able to just accelerate, to match my speed,

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00:12:57,000 --> 00:13:03,000

and then to rapidly go away, we do not possess that technology.

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00:13:04,000 --> 00:13:06,000

Dave Fraver was my commanding officer.

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00:13:09,000 --> 00:13:10,000

Dave had his encounter.

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00:13:10,000 --> 00:13:13,000

He comes back and lands on the carrier and goes, I'm a little weirded out.

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00:13:14,000 --> 00:13:16,000

We were out there and we saw this object.

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00:13:16,000 --> 00:13:20,000

I need you to go out to this sector of airspace and try to find it.

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00:13:23,000 --> 00:13:26,000

He's been flying his entire career over 20 years.

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00:13:26,000 --> 00:13:29,000

When he says something like that, I take it seriously.

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00:13:29,000 --> 00:13:33,000

Chad decided if there's any way possible, if I can get this thing on video,

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00:13:33,000 --> 00:13:34,000

I'm going to do it.

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00:13:34,000 --> 00:13:38,000

I think it's a testament to Chad Underwood and his pilot,

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00:13:38,000 --> 00:13:42,000

their experience, their expertise, their technical acumen

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00:13:42,000 --> 00:13:47,000

that they were able to launch and find it and bring back FLIR footage.

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00:13:48,000 --> 00:13:51,000

You can see we just jumped to infrared.

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00:13:51,000 --> 00:13:53,000

Target is now white against a black background.

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00:13:53,000 --> 00:13:54,000

It's the same picture.

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00:13:54,000 --> 00:13:56,000

It's just a different kind of polarity.

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00:13:57,000 --> 00:14:02,000

I told my pilot, I'm like, hey, I'm going to go into every single field of view, zoom,

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00:14:02,000 --> 00:14:06,000

TV and just try to bring back as much footage.

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00:14:08,000 --> 00:14:12,000

So we pop the tapes in and take a look and every single eyeball in the room

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00:14:12,000 --> 00:14:14,000

was just like wide open, like whoa.

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00:14:18,000 --> 00:14:23,000

How do I describe this to someone who's going to be, you know, skeptical

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00:14:23,000 --> 00:14:26,000

and there was kind of that stigma of like, all right, you saw an alien.

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00:14:26,000 --> 00:14:28,000

I'm like, I didn't say I saw an alien.

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00:14:28,000 --> 00:14:31,000

All I can tell you is I couldn't describe it.

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00:14:32,000 --> 00:14:35,000

There's a lot more videos there.

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00:14:38,000 --> 00:14:43,000

What we're seeing on gun camera footage is being validated and verified by eye witness testimony,

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00:14:43,000 --> 00:14:46,000

which is also being further substantiated by radar data.

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00:14:49,000 --> 00:14:53,000

My intent was to have this information presented to the Secretary of Defense

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00:14:53,000 --> 00:14:55,000

so he could make an informed decision.

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00:14:57,000 --> 00:15:01,000

There are aspects of this phenomenon that definitely belong within the national security arena.

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00:15:02,000 --> 00:15:07,000

Especially if these objects were over controlled U.S. airspace, that's inherent government business.

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00:15:09,000 --> 00:15:11,000

The boss needed to see the data.

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00:15:12,000 --> 00:15:15,000

And unfortunately, that information was not permitted to get to him.

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00:15:15,000 --> 00:15:19,000

On a regular routine basis, I was brought up to the Secretary's suite

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00:15:19,000 --> 00:15:22,000

and I was briefing his direct reports.

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00:15:24,000 --> 00:15:26,000

But they wouldn't bring it to his attention.

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00:15:27,000 --> 00:15:31,000

And I suspect they were trying to save him from embarrassment

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00:15:31,000 --> 00:15:36,000

because if someone in the media said, were you ever briefed on UFOs, he'd have to say yes.

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00:15:37,000 --> 00:15:43,000

And so after several failed attempts to brief the Secretary of Defense, I chose to resign.

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00:15:44,000 --> 00:15:51,000

Sometimes if you want to help the system, you have to leave the very system to do it.

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00:15:51,000 --> 00:15:53,000

And that's what I chose to do.

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00:15:53,000 --> 00:16:00,000

My resignation wasn't easy. It was probably most difficult on my family.

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00:16:01,000 --> 00:16:03,000

I had given up a successful career.

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00:16:04,000 --> 00:16:11,000

But it's kind of a code of ethic with us in government that if you can't fix a problem internally, then you leave.

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00:16:12,000 --> 00:16:14,000

Which is ultimately what I had to do.

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00:16:17,000 --> 00:16:19,000

Leslie, interview, take one, Mark.

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00:16:23,000 --> 00:16:29,000

My name is Leslie Kane and I'm an investigative journalist and I've been reporting on UFOs for about 21 years.

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00:16:30,000 --> 00:16:37,000

In the fall of 2017, I got a call from a source of mine, Chris Mellon, a former Undersecretary of Defense,

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00:16:37,000 --> 00:16:40,000

who was very interested in UFOs.

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00:16:40,000 --> 00:16:43,000

And he invited me to the secret meeting in Washington, D.C.

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00:16:44,000 --> 00:16:51,000

And I eventually learned that the purpose was for me to meet the former head of an official program within the Department of Defense,

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00:16:51,000 --> 00:16:55,000

which was studying UFOs and had been doing so for 10 years.

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00:16:57,000 --> 00:17:01,000

I met Lou Elizondo the day after he resigned from the secret program.

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00:17:02,000 --> 00:17:10,000

So this was unbelievable to me. There was a program and I was actually about to meet the person who headed up that program.

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00:17:10,000 --> 00:17:14,000

It was a big deal. It was the biggest moment of my career as a journalist.

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00:17:15,000 --> 00:17:19,000

These are original copies from the original negative of the probably the most...

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00:17:19,000 --> 00:17:26,000

When I first started reporting on UFOs in 2000, I was working at a public radio station in

Berkeley, California.

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00:17:27,000 --> 00:17:31,000

And suddenly this colleague from France sent me a report in the mail.

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00:17:32,000 --> 00:17:38,000

The report was called the Cameto Report and I had the only exclusive English translation.

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00:17:40,000 --> 00:17:47,000

What it was was a 90-page study of official UFO cases put together by French military officials.

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00:17:47,000 --> 00:17:51,000

Generals and admiral, the chief of police.

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00:17:52,000 --> 00:17:56,000

What really stunned me when I read it was their conclusion.

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00:17:57,000 --> 00:18:06,000

What they said was that the extraterrestrial hypothesis was the most valid, rational and logical explanation for the UFO cases that they studied.

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00:18:07,000 --> 00:18:16,000

So I thought this was a huge story and I thought to myself, what if the equivalent level of officials in America said something like that?

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00:18:16,000 --> 00:18:20,000

Wouldn't that be front-page news? Wouldn't that go all over the world?

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00:18:20,000 --> 00:18:26,000

And then I pitched a story to the Boston Globe and in May of 2000, that story came out.

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00:18:27,000 --> 00:18:31,000

The response was huge within the UFO world.

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00:18:31,000 --> 00:18:38,000

But what I was surprised about was that there wasn't more response outside of the people who already cared about this topic.

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00:18:39,000 --> 00:18:46,000

And so my goal in writing about UFOs has been mainly to bring information forward to the public.

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00:18:46,000 --> 00:18:50,000

But beyond that, it's to motivate our government to pay attention.

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00:18:51,000 --> 00:18:58,000

I commend the media for tackling this because they're putting a lot at risk as well, reporting on this topic.

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00:18:59,000 --> 00:19:03,000

Pilots are in a position to provide very useful information to scientists.

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00:19:03,000 --> 00:19:08,000

That's how we have a comprehensive conversation with the American people.

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00:19:10,000 --> 00:19:15,000

I did not walk away from that meeting with Lou Elizondo carrying anything with me.

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00:19:17,000 --> 00:19:28,000

I was shown three videos of UFOs and these were official Department of Defense videos that were, without question, unexplained objects.

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00:19:33,000 --> 00:19:37,000

She ran through the videos and she asked me, are these authentic?

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00:19:37,000 --> 00:19:40,000

And I said, I can tell you that the videos are authentic.

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00:19:41,000 --> 00:19:45,000

And the only reason why I'm telling you this is because they're unclassified.

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00:19:45,000 --> 00:19:50,000

I facilitated the review process for them through the Department of Defense.

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00:19:52,000 --> 00:19:59,000

Two of them had audio tapes of the pilots exclaiming about what they were seeing and they're shocked and they're awe and everything else.

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00:20:00,000 --> 00:20:05,000

This was just absolutely stunning to me because there had been no official videos of UFOs released.

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00:20:05,000 --> 00:20:10,000

I don't think ever, but certainly not since way back in the 50s or 60s.

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00:20:11,000 --> 00:20:16,000

And they were official. That's the thing. They were just somebody out with a cell phone taking a video.

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00:20:20,000 --> 00:20:26,000

When you hear the pilots reaction to these encounters, it's very compelling.

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00:20:30,000 --> 00:20:31,000

My God!

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00:20:32,000 --> 00:20:40,000

They're obviously startled. They're obviously encountering something that they can't explain, that we need to figure out what we collectively are going to do about it.

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00:20:42,000 --> 00:20:45,000

And that's why I resigned from the Department of Defense.

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00:20:46,000 --> 00:20:54,000

Luis Elizondo's letter of resignation that he wrote for the Secretary of Defense, I think that

might have just knocked me out of him more than anything else.

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00:20:55,000 --> 00:21:03,000

He explained why he was resigning this job and it had to do with his understanding that UFOs were a national security concern.

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00:21:05,000 --> 00:21:12,000

To see that written down and the courage that it took for him to do that was just incredible.

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00:21:12,000 --> 00:21:27,000

In order to understand why I resigned, I think you have to go back to where I came from.

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00:21:28,000 --> 00:21:31,000

I come from on my father's side, Cuban immigrants.

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00:21:32,000 --> 00:21:39,000

That's meaningful for me because this country offered my family opportunities that nobody else would.

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00:21:40,000 --> 00:21:47,000

And so from a very young age, I've always wanted to serve the country that gave my family so much.

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00:21:49,000 --> 00:21:55,000

You know, ironically, I left the Department of Defense out of loyalty, not disloyalty.

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00:21:56,000 --> 00:22:00,000

I left the Department of Defense to finish the very mission they gave me in the first place.

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00:22:00,000 --> 00:22:10,000

After reporting all these years on UFOs, there was nothing that came close to the power of that particular meeting.

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00:22:12,000 --> 00:22:22,000

Once I realized this was a big story, I teamed up with my colleague Ralph Blumenthal, who was a freelance reporter for the New York Times, and he pitched it to the head editor.

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00:22:23,000 --> 00:22:28,000

I had never reported for the New York Times before, so I didn't know what would happen.

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00:22:29,000 --> 00:22:31,000

But that's where I felt the story should go.

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00:22:32,000 --> 00:22:38,000

The public has a right to know about what we are learning about this extraordinary phenomenon.

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00:22:43,000 --> 00:22:46,000

I think it was sometime in the fall of 2017.

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00:22:47,000 --> 00:22:53,000

My boss, the Washington Bureau Chief, walked up to my desk and said, do you want to write about UFOs?

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00:22:54,000 --> 00:23:01,000

And we both sort of laughed, and she said, Leslie Kane had information about a secret Pentagon program.

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00:23:02,000 --> 00:23:07,000

And that was easily to me fascinating. There's no way I don't want to write about it.

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00:23:09,000 --> 00:23:13,000

I'm Helene Cooper. I'm the Pentagon correspondent for the New York Times.

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00:23:13,000 --> 00:23:17,000

I've been with the paper since 2004.

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00:23:18,000 --> 00:23:22,000

You can always tell Pentagon reporter because we like to say that's the best beat in Washington.

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00:23:23,000 --> 00:23:28,000

You're on aircraft carriers, you're on fighter jets, I've been on bombers, I've been on the B-1 and the B-2.

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00:23:29,000 --> 00:23:33,000

You're on naval destroyers in the South China Sea. You're never bored.

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00:23:33,000 --> 00:23:34,000

You're never bored.

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00:23:38,000 --> 00:23:45,000

Once Helene Cooper was on board, we set up a meeting with Luis Elizondo, the former head of the Pentagon program.

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00:23:47,000 --> 00:23:51,000

We met up at a hotel somewhere near Capitol Hill.

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00:23:53,000 --> 00:23:55,000

It started in the afternoon, it ended up in the evening.

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00:23:56,000 --> 00:23:59,000

She made it very clear that she was writing this story.

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00:24:00,000 --> 00:24:04,000

I owes a little bit to be completely forthcoming, a little intimidated.

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00:24:05,000 --> 00:24:09,000

When the New York Times comes knocking, that'll get your attention pretty quickly.

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00:24:10,000 --> 00:24:14,000

It's stacks of papers and information.

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00:24:15,000 --> 00:24:19,000

I think they were trying to get me to confirm who was the sponsor of the program.

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00:24:20,000 --> 00:24:26,000

He told us that Senator Harry Reid had put money in the Pentagon budget to fund this program.

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00:24:26,000 --> 00:24:33,000

Leslie, Ralph and I all thought that Harry Reid would deny that he had put the money in there.

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00:24:34,000 --> 00:24:37,000

This was black money, it was kind of off the books.

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00:24:38,000 --> 00:24:45,000

And so all I wanted was to nail the fact that the Pentagon had a UFO, secret UFO program.

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00:24:46,000 --> 00:24:47,000

That's all I needed to do.

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00:24:48,000 --> 00:24:52,000

I'm not trying to prove that they're UFOs, I'm not trying to prove that anybody's visited.

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00:24:52,000 --> 00:24:59,000

I just wanted to interview the people who were involved in this program and put them on the record.

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00:25:01,000 --> 00:25:05,000

Going to interview Senator Reid was a big deal.

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00:25:06,000 --> 00:25:09,000

We needed him to acknowledge that he put the money into the program.

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00:25:10,000 --> 00:25:14,000

If we didn't have Harry Reid, we might not have a story. He was that important.

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00:25:15,000 --> 00:25:22,000

We didn't know whether he would be willing to go on the record because this was a very sketchy field to begin with.

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00:25:23,000 --> 00:25:40,000

You know, most people thought if you're a senior person in the government, it's kind of a career ender to say that the government should actually take seriously the prospect that unidentified aerial phenomena might be, in fact, UFOs.

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00:25:41,000 --> 00:25:47,000

And so I flew to Las Vegas to meet with Senator Reid.

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00:25:49,000 --> 00:25:52,000

He like has this huge suite of offices at the Bellagio.

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00:25:53,000 --> 00:25:55,000

This is going to be it. This is my one shot.

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00:25:56,000 --> 00:26:00,000

And I walked in to talk to him and he was completely open.

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00:26:01,000 --> 00:26:06,000

These unidentified flying phenomena or objects, you know, I don't know what they are.

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00:26:06,000 --> 00:26:10,000

But we've established one thing. They exist.

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00:26:11,000 --> 00:26:18,000

In that moment, you're sitting there as a reporter and your blood is sort of pounding because you're getting the goods.

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00:26:19,000 --> 00:26:23,000

I was so excited. It's like I'm writing it down and I can't believe he's telling me this stuff.

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00:26:26,000 --> 00:26:32,000

My name is Harry Reid. I served in the United States Congress from 1982 to 2017.

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00:26:33,000 --> 00:26:42,000

I was born and raised in Searchlight, Nevada, which is about 55 miles here from Las Vegas.

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00:26:43,000 --> 00:26:48,000

During the time that I grew up there, it was, uh, the mines were gone and then the brown business was prostitution.

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00:26:49,000 --> 00:26:52,000

So that's the atmosphere I was raised in.

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00:26:53,000 --> 00:26:58,000

I can still remember looking up at the sky, just wondering what it was all about.

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00:26:58,000 --> 00:27:01,000

And I always, always have remembered that.

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00:27:03,000 --> 00:27:10,000

Harry Reid really stood out because he was one of the few members of Congress who were willing to talk about this issue.

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00:27:11,000 --> 00:27:16,000

And he had also gotten secret funds to start this program.

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00:27:17,000 --> 00:27:21,000

It was a modest amount, \$22 million, which is a drop in the bucket of the Pentagon budget,

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00:27:22,000 --> 00:27:26,000

but it was the first significant amount of money to be dedicated to this issue of UFOs.

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00:27:26,000 --> 00:27:31,000

Well, it's interesting. You know, my staff, they said in so many words,

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00:27:32,000 --> 00:27:37,000

Senator, don't get involved in this. This is too weird. It's not going to help your career.

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00:27:38,000 --> 00:27:40,000

Dude, that is so strange.

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00:27:41,000 --> 00:27:52,000

Didn't tend to be a topic that members of the House or members of the Senate or people in senior positions in the executive branch wanted to embrace.

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00:27:52,000 --> 00:27:57,000

But I was determined to learn more about this.

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00:27:58,000 --> 00:28:03,000

And so in spite of the admonitions for me to stay the hell away from it, I went ahead and did it.

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00:28:04,000 --> 00:28:10,000

Well, God bless Senator Reid. He was certainly someone I looked up to and admired.

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00:28:11,000 --> 00:28:14,000

People want their leaders and representatives to be bold.

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00:28:15,000 --> 00:28:18,000

And if you're unwilling to be bold, then why are you in office?

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00:28:22,000 --> 00:28:27,000

And as I look back over my involvement in this, I think, what if we hadn't done this?

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00:28:28,000 --> 00:28:32,000

Where would we be without the work that we did? We would be nowhere.

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00:28:34,000 --> 00:28:39,000

From a scientific standpoint, technological standpoint, security of this nation,

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00:28:40,000 --> 00:28:42,000

these are the reasons we have to continue looking into this.

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00:28:52,000 --> 00:29:01,000

At the end of the interview with Senator Reid, I walked out of the Bellagio and there's a bridge from the Bellagio over the strip to whatever is on the other side.

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00:29:02,000 --> 00:29:06,000

And it's a pedestrian bridge. And I called Leslie and Ralph and they were on the phone with Lou.

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00:29:07,000 --> 00:29:10,000

So we're in this four-way phone call and I was like, he confirmed everything.

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00:29:11,000 --> 00:29:14,000

Harry Reid had never spoken out before about this program.

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00:29:15,000 --> 00:29:19,000

So this was like the first moment in which he came out on the topic. And that was a big deal.

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00:29:19,000 --> 00:29:26,000

We were ecstatic because that moment we knew we had it. It's like, no matter what happens next, we have the story.

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00:29:29,000 --> 00:29:36,000

The lead up to the actual publication of the story on December 17th was torturous.

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00:29:37,000 --> 00:29:43,000

Our editors were constantly saying, make sure we put skeptics in there. We put people challenging this notion.

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00:29:44,000 --> 00:29:51,000

This caution by our editors was starting to naturally get on our nerves. It's like, run the story already.

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00:29:52,000 --> 00:29:55,000

We've like dotted every possible I. We can dot.

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00:29:56,000 --> 00:30:01,000

And we knew at this time that Politico was chasing the story as well.

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00:30:03,000 --> 00:30:07,000

It's Saturday morning. It's 11 posts at the story. I think it's 11 or 12.

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00:30:07,000 --> 00:30:12,000

And we're hearing from Lou and from other people that Politico is about to post.

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00:30:13,000 --> 00:30:18,000

And I'm on the phone with the guy who's the Saturday editor going, publish, just publish already.

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00:30:19,000 --> 00:30:22,000

And he's tinkering around with what kind of headline do we want.

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00:30:23,000 --> 00:30:26,000

I was just like, publish, publish. And he finally posted the story.

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00:30:29,000 --> 00:30:33,000

The story is up and I'm like, thank God it's up. I put my phone in my pocketbook.

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00:30:33,000 --> 00:30:38,000

I go into Costco and I'm buying, I don't know, what tenderloin for Christmas.

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00:30:39,000 --> 00:30:44,000

And I'm in there for about an hour and I come back out and my phone is like, has blown up.

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00:30:45,000 --> 00:30:49,000

And a striking expose published over the weekend, The New York Times revealed the existence.

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00:30:50,000 --> 00:30:53,000

Amazon has confirmed the existence of the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program.

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00:30:54,000 --> 00:30:59,000

People were calling me and they were like a tax and it was just like, the response was huge.

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00:30:59,000 --> 00:31:04,000

It was a firestorm. Tens of millions of dollars for the project were pushed through.

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00:31:05,000 --> 00:31:09,000

It was all over the place. Unveiled the existence of a real life X-Files department.

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00:31:10,000 --> 00:31:11,000

It was all over the world.

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00:31:13,000 --> 00:31:18,000

But according to Louis Célézondo, who directed the financial program, it just went like wildfire.

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00:31:21,000 --> 00:31:22,000

It was a huge deal.

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00:31:24,000 --> 00:31:26,000

Why do you think it attracted so much attention?

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00:31:26,000 --> 00:31:31,000

I think one of the main reasons it attracted so much attention was because of those two videos that we included.

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00:31:37,000 --> 00:31:41,000

I mean, there is nothing like watching a video of a UFO for people.

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00:31:42,000 --> 00:31:48,000

Those videos garnered tremendous views among the most watched videos of times it ever put up.

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00:31:49,000 --> 00:32:00,000

So the response was huge, but that was when I started to realize just how intense the people who care about this are.

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00:32:01,000 --> 00:32:04,000

And just also how equally intense the skeptics are.

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00:32:06,000 --> 00:32:10,000

I'm content to say that's mysterious. I don't know, maybe it's a glitch in the hardware.

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00:32:11,000 --> 00:32:14,000

And if you're going to say, no, it's not a glitch in the hardware, are you really sure?

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00:32:19,000 --> 00:32:28,000

For the Navy videos, there are in fact explanations that involve nothing more complex than commercial aircraft or balloons or things like that.

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00:32:29,000 --> 00:32:32,000

It doesn't mean they're necessarily alien craft.

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00:32:33,000 --> 00:32:40,000

I think that the assumption that we're being visited fails on the evidence of it, but it's not that it's impossible.

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00:32:41,000 --> 00:32:45,000

It's just, from my point of view, so difficult to go from one star system to another.

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00:32:45,000 --> 00:32:50,000

I think that it's unlikely these are alien craft.

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00:32:51,000 --> 00:32:58,000

The universe brims with mysteries, and we so want many of those mysteries to be a light in the sky you don't understand.

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00:32:59,000 --> 00:33:02,000

Gee, I want that to be aliens visiting us.

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00:33:03,000 --> 00:33:07,000

But for a skeptical scientist, that would probably be the last explanation.

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00:33:09,000 --> 00:33:13,000

The skeptics had two major points of focus after our story came out.

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00:33:13,000 --> 00:33:21,000

One of them was on the videos, because they didn't necessarily believe that those videos showed some kind of anomalous object.

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00:33:22,000 --> 00:33:23,000

They thought they could be explained.

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00:33:24,000 --> 00:33:32,000

The second point is the skepticism about these being extraterrestrial craft, which personally, to me, is sort of a disconnect,

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00:33:33,000 --> 00:33:37,000

because we're not saying that they're extraterrestrial, we're just saying we can't explain them.

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00:33:38,000 --> 00:33:44,000

Now, I don't mind someone being skeptical. I think healthy skepticism is important.

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00:33:45,000 --> 00:33:50,000

In the same weird sort of way, skeptics are really no different than believers.

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00:33:51,000 --> 00:33:53,000

They're just on the opposite end of the argument.

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00:33:54,000 --> 00:33:59,000

At the end of the day, data is what is going to determine the validity of something.

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00:33:59,000 --> 00:34:06,000

Well, if humanity wants to understand what is causing this phenomenon, then we need to do real scientific study.

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00:34:07,000 --> 00:34:17,000

And that means we need to collect data, we need to analyze that data, and understand how it might be possible for that phenomenon to fit within the laws of physics.

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00:34:18,000 --> 00:34:20,000

Now, watch the way this thing starts to turn.

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00:34:21,000 --> 00:34:24,000

But we can't speculate about what it is. We can't just imagine what it is.

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00:34:24,000 --> 00:34:32,000

You're looking between 20 and 25,000 feet in altitude, and this thing, when it turns sideways, does go down.

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00:34:33,000 --> 00:34:41,000

We need real hard data. This 99.9 and range 99. Those are indications that my radar is receiving jamming cues.

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00:34:42,000 --> 00:34:47,000

It's possible that these objects represent a threat to the United States.

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00:34:48,000 --> 00:34:51,000

It's behaving in strange ways. It has an aura around it.

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00:34:51,000 --> 00:34:56,000

Then we need to know exactly what they are so that we can respond accordingly.

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00:34:57,000 --> 00:35:03,000

And so I think it's extremely important for us to understand an unidentified area of the phenomenon.

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00:35:07,000 --> 00:35:15,000

After the New York Times story was blasted out on the Internet on a Saturday, the story ended up on the front page of the Sunday New York Times.

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00:35:16,000 --> 00:35:21,000

And then it was a whole inside page when you opened it up. So it was a long piece.

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00:35:23,000 --> 00:35:31,000

During all the years I covered UFOs, and I had access to some newspapers, but they weren't at the caliber of the New York Times.

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00:35:32,000 --> 00:35:38,000

And so to see a story on the front page of that newspaper just meant everything to me.

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00:35:39,000 --> 00:35:40,000

Did you know it was going to be on the front page?

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00:35:41,000 --> 00:35:44,000

No. No, I did not know. It was going to be on the front page.

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00:35:45,000 --> 00:35:56,000

It was, wow, looking back, I haven't thought about that in a long time. It was profound.

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00:35:57,000 --> 00:36:04,000

Not only have the New York Times rarely covered UFOs at all, and when they had, they were usually kind of ridiculing it.

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00:36:05,000 --> 00:36:11,000

It's really the fodder more for late night talk shows than it is for front page reporting.

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00:36:12,000 --> 00:36:18,000

Did you go through the secret files, the UFO documents?

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00:36:19,000 --> 00:36:20,000

I'm not telling you nothing.

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00:36:22,000 --> 00:36:26,000

When it comes to aliens, there's some things I just can't tell you on air.

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00:36:27,000 --> 00:36:28,000

But you don't tell us off that.

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00:36:29,000 --> 00:36:30,000

Great.

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00:36:31,000 --> 00:36:37,000

But the New York Times piece, it kind of opened up that you could treat this seriously.

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00:36:37,000 --> 00:36:46,000

What it did is it removed a lot of the stigma that was attached to the UFO world.

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00:36:47,000 --> 00:36:54,000

Now, instead of looking at it as a joke, we can start looking at these objects from a scientific standpoint.

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00:36:55,000 --> 00:37:02,000

We can gather the information, we can gather the data, and then have experts who are qualified analyze it in a systematic way.

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00:37:02,000 --> 00:37:07,000

And so that's why I think it's important to destigmatize the issue.

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00:37:08,000 --> 00:37:17,000

One reason that article was so compelling and so good is that it was just very factual based on scientific evidence.

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00:37:18,000 --> 00:37:27,000

And I think that was the beginning of having the American people and probably the world take a look at these areas of unidentified flying objects more intensely than they had before.

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00:37:27,000 --> 00:37:32,000

So the New York Times article generated a lot of questions among people.

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00:37:33,000 --> 00:37:37,000

Whoa, you know, they're studying these objects and we don't know what they are.

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00:37:38,000 --> 00:37:41,000

Where's all the intelligence data? How come we didn't know anything?

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00:37:42,000 --> 00:37:47,000

And they demonstrate technology that we don't seem to have and we didn't even know about this.

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00:37:49,000 --> 00:37:56,000

There's no doubt that there are objects that are seen that behave in ways that are not natural for this planet or for the future.

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00:37:57,000 --> 00:38:02,000

And before this environment, this is a phenomenon we do not yet understand.

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00:38:05,000 --> 00:38:07,000

There's nothing wrong with us not understanding it.

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00:38:08,000 --> 00:38:15,000

There are many things in the universe that we do not understand, but it asks us to investigate to learn more.

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00:38:16,000 --> 00:38:26,000

Just as we'd want to learn more about any of the stars or galaxies we see in the universe, any of the new creatures we find at the bottom of our oceans here on this planet,

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00:38:27,000 --> 00:38:29,000

we don't want to learn more about this too.

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00:38:31,000 --> 00:38:41,000

My hope is that we will use the U.S. intelligence community to solve this mystery once and for all, to find out where are they coming from?

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00:38:42,000 --> 00:38:45,000

Who's behind them? What is the agenda?

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00:38:46,000 --> 00:38:52,000

We have the means and the capability to do that if we set our minds to it as a nation.

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00:38:52,000 --> 00:39:00,000

Unfortunately, the government has been pretty secretive about providing hard data to better understand what this phenomenon might be.

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00:39:02,000 --> 00:39:11,000

So right now, what we still have is a lot of speculation, a lot of what-ifs, and no hard information.

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00:39:12,000 --> 00:39:20,000

The biggest question that remains for me is what else do they have inside the government? What do they actually know about UFOs?

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00:39:21,000 --> 00:39:24,000

And why can't more be released to the public?

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00:39:26,000 --> 00:39:36,000

And this is a big question because we spent so long obfuscating the truth about this topic that we've somewhat backed ourselves into a corner, a corner for over 70 years.

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00:39:37,000 --> 00:39:45,000

Mr. Secretary, there have been charges that the Air Force, for reasons best known to the Air Force, is hiding something in the UFO field. What is that, if anything?

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00:39:46,000 --> 00:39:53,000

And I do not think this is a conversation like fine wine, where the longer we keep a cork on it, the better it gets.

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00:39:54,000 --> 00:40:00,000

I think this is a conversation more like rotten vegetables in a refrigerator, and the longer we don't address it, the more it's going to start to smell.

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00:40:01,000 --> 00:40:09,000

There is nothing in Air Force files that come to a conclusion that spaceships have visited the Earth.

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00:40:10,000 --> 00:40:15,000

I assume that the secrecy is just because that is what they do in the government.

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00:40:16,000 --> 00:40:26,000

There's so many programs going on in that building that they don't talk about. You know, they classify everything. They just add to the mysteriousness of it.

416

00:40:27,000 --> 00:40:32,000

We should never be afraid of what we don't know. That is an absurd reaction.

417

00:40:33,000 --> 00:40:37,000

The target is three degrees to the left of my nose, and it's five degrees below my nose.

418

00:40:38,000 --> 00:40:45,000

Not knowing is where you start your inquiry. So we were operating in and around these waters off the coast.

419

00:40:46,000 --> 00:40:53,000

It doesn't mean it's where you end your inquiry, and that's where I think the US military, if they haven't been doing the work, is mistaken.

420

00:40:59,000 --> 00:41:01,000

Oh my God.

421

00:41:01,000 --> 00:41:06,000

They don't look like no plane. They don't look like no helicopters. What the f*** is this?

422

00:41:07,000 --> 00:41:10,000

UFO sightings burst into the news in 1947.

423

00:41:11,000 --> 00:41:13,000

These sightings have continued ever since.

424

00:41:14,000 --> 00:41:18,000

The Air Force made an effort to clear the air about the phenomenon.

425

00:41:19,000 --> 00:41:20,000

There's nothing to hide at all.

426

00:41:22,000 --> 00:41:26,000

I was stunned that we didn't have the integrity to pursue this.

427

00:41:27,000 --> 00:41:30,000

The US government closed its 30 UFOs.

428

00:41:31,000 --> 00:41:34,000

The work fell into the hands of civilian groups.

429

00:41:35,000 --> 00:41:36,000

The UFO reports not only exist, but persist.

430

00:41:37,000 --> 00:41:38,000

I mean, it's a definite UFO.

431

00:41:39,000 --> 00:41:44,000

The government owes it to this country to investigate sightings of extraordinary objects.

432

00:41:45,000 --> 00:41:46,000

They cover the whole entire sky.

433

00:41:47,000 --> 00:41:49,000

People want to know, is this otherworldly?

434

00:41:50,000 --> 00:41:55,000

This could be one of the biggest events in all of human history.