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Editorial

Happy Christmas

From all the staff here at the United Kingdom UFO Network may we wish you all, no matter where you are in the world a very HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

Reminder

May I remind all subscribers to take note of the information paragraph at the end of the e-zine.

Post all reports etc to: [ufo@holodeck.demon.co.uk](mailto:ufo@holodeck.demon.co.uk)  
Post all comments on e-zine contents to: [feedback@nolimits.demon.co.uk](mailto:feedback@nolimits.demon.co.uk)  
Post all irc inquiries to: [ufo-irc-advice@crowman.demon.co.uk](mailto:ufo-irc-advice@crowman.demon.co.uk)

Please do not post to the St Johns List Server address as mail may get lost.

IRC

Things have now changed slightly as some of you will be aware with our weekly irc (internet relay chat) meetings. Thanks to Crow our irc advisor for the following information:

We now have our very own IRC DNS name for UFO so anyone who wants to join our meetings from anywhere in the world can now just type:

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/server ufo.ultranet.org
```

This will now connect them to a random ultranet server, so it will be very easy for people to remember and as easy as A,B,C for newbies or people who cannot remember or do not know the latest server names.

For advice on connecting to our weekly meetings via the irc please send mail to: [ufo-irc-advice@crowman.demon.co.uk](mailto:ufo-irc-advice@crowman.demon.co.uk)

Radio Documentary

UK.UFO.NW have been contacted by Nik Rawlinson who is an Independent Broadcaster. Nik is in the process of putting together a radio documentary on the UFO subject and has requested the help of all subscribers to the uk.ufo.nw e-zine. Nik sent the staff here an exclusive demonstration tape of the way the program is likely to be put together, but he needs your help. The demo was very well done and has impressive content.

Nik has asked for you to send him your idea's of what you think should go into a radio UFO documentary. So get your thinking caps on. It doesn't matter where you are in the world send your idea's to Nik at the following address:

[nik@nikraw.demon.co.uk](mailto:nik@nikraw.demon.co.uk)

As soon as we have further details regarding the broadcasting of the documentary, we'll be sure to let you know.

[U1]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: The Express newspaper  
Date: October 1996

Soccer chief who saw UFO is under the moon

By Nigel Bunyan

A millionaire soccer club chairman threatened to resign yesterday after being "publicly humiliated" over his bizarre account of a UFO sighting.

For 20 years Michael Knighton, 45, who owns 90 per cent of Carlisle United, thought he had kept the lid on the most astonishing event of his life.

True, he and his wife, Rosemary, had watched an apparently alien craft perform a range of "impossible" aerogymnastics as they set off from their Yorkshire home one afternoon in 1976.

And, also true, as the glowing UFO disappeared into the stratosphere, he believed he had received a telepathic message urging him: "Don't be afraid, Michael." But, as a businessman, he realised how he might be treated if the press ever got hold of the story.

Unfortunately for Mr Knighton, he hinted at his close encounter while at a meeting of the Aetherius Society, an organisation dedicated to studying metaphysics.

A local reporter questioned him in more detail and a front-page report duly appeared in the West Cumbrian News and Star under the heading, "Knighton: Aliens Spoke To Me."

Mr Knighton was not so much glowing as incandescent. Despite the newspaper's assertion that he was sufficiently co-operative to draw a sketch of the craft in the reporters notebook, he maintains that the disclosure was made during an off-the-record conversation.

"I feel deeply betrayed," he said. "This was a very private story and I made it perfectly clear to the reporter that it was not for publication.

"The damage has been done now and so I've decided to resign at the end of the season. I have a nine-year-old son and it's not fair for him to be ridiculed."

He still cannot explain his "wonderful" UFO experience. "It was quite extraordinary," he said. "This object fell out of the sky, started off as a tiny dot like a shooting star but it was unbelievable.

"It changed from a inverted V to a huge metallic disc the size of half a football pitch. We watched it perform the most unbelievable aerobatics in silence."

Mr Knighton and his wife watched the display for 30 minutes, watching with "two men walking their dog". Although they later read reports of a similar sighting, they decided against informing the authorities.

"My wife was quite overawed by what we saw and she would not like to experience it again. I was totally enthralled."

The News and Star has now followed its "Alien speak" story with a campaign to persuade Mr Knighton to stay.

In a front-page article, Keith Sutton, the editor, tendered an "unreserved" apology. He said: "Just because Michael Knighton has seen a UFO doesn't disqualify him from being a football club chairman."

Last night Mr Knighton said he would reconsider his decision.

"Perhaps it has been an overreaction on my part, which is a bad sign. I don't get uptight about things but I did feel betrayed," he said.

Mr Knighton hinted that he might stay as chairman but appoint a new chief executive.

[U2]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: News Of The World newspaper  
Date: 1st December 1996

UFO me a million

Man tells insurers: I had close encounter of the third party kind

By Ian Edmonson

A top insurance company is to boldly go where no other has gone before - considering a 1 million pounds Stirling payout to a man who claims he was abducted by aliens.

UFO fanatic Joseph Carpenter is over the moon that the City moneymen are taking him seriously.

The 23-year-old electrician from Edmonton, North London, bought the 102 pounds and 50 pence Stirling policy in October to guard against kidnap by visitors from outer space.

Shining

Just one month later Joseph was filling in his claim form. And he swears he has video proof.

Now his insurance company GRIP have employed scientists to verify his X Files-style report.

"I have camcorder footage of a triangular craft shining a light down on me and taking me off the ground," claimed Joseph.

"And I've also got DNA evidence found on the ship. It's like a claw and definately not of this Earth. It all happened while I was UFO spotting in at Swindon, Wiltshire, near a military base.

"I got the policy as I'm a firm believer in unidentified flying objects and wanted to put my money where my mouth is."

The insurance company have admitted they initially offered alien cover as a stunt, along with protection against Bobbitting (amputation of a man's private parts by his enraged spouse) and virgin birth.

Feeble

But now director Simon Burgess admits: "Mr Carpenter's claim is being treated very seriously. We didn't think anyone would go this far.

"The information is now being assessed by a major British company and evidence offered by the policyholder is under investigation by a Cambridge college.

"The underwriters have set aside reserves sufficient to meet the full claim.

"We set out with a policy to part feeble-minded people from their cash-now it looks like it may backfire."

But Joseph could have trouble getting insured next year-after blowing his no claims bonus the premium will sky-rocket...

Saucer Secret 1 - Rocker Dave Davies of Sixties star band The Kinks claims he was snatched by aliens in 1982 while touring America. "My lower body went numb," he recalled. "Then I heard voices, intelligences from another planet, monitoring events on Earth. They showed me their craft."

Saucer Secret 2 - Late one summer night Rosalind Reynolds, 22, was driving from Clacton, Essex, when bright horseshoe-shaped lights came racing towards her. That's all she could remember until, under hypnosis, she told how aliens abducted her and experimented on her. She still has nightmares.

Saucer Secret 3 - Labourer Antonio Villas-Boas, 23, of Sao Francisco de Sale in Brazil, claims he was beamed up to a pear-shaped spaceship where aliens took up a blood sample then forced him to bed a female humanoid. Doctors later found scars on him, similar to radiation poisoning symptoms.

[U3]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: Daily Express newspaper  
Date: Tuesday 3rd December 1996

UFO left soldier in a trance

A soldier under hypnosis has recalled how he was left dazed and terrified by a UFO.

News of the alleged incident, which happened while he was on night exercise on Salisbury Plain with five comrades, has just been revealed.

Put into a trance at the request of close encounter sleuths from the magazine UFO Reality, he told how the party was zapped by beams of light from a mysterious black triangular aircraft.

The alleged sighting, in 1990, happened in a part of the area said to house a secret Ministry of Defence compound.

Investigators believe it could have been connected with top secret technology rather than an alien craft.

[U4]\*\*\*\*\*

From: Paul Jones <paul@termcon.demon.co.uk>  
Source: mil-spotters <mil-spotters@tempest.dial.pipex.net>  
Date: Friday 6th December 1996

Spotters in the Warton area?

----- Forwarded Message Follows -----

From: Roland Hamblin 01932 824318 <roland.hamblin@gecm.com>  
Subject: Re: Spotters in the Warton area?  
To: mil-spotters <mil-spotters@tempest.dial.pipex.net>

Further to my recent request for help concerning unusual happenings in the North West I thought that you may wish to read the following response from an observer in Lancashire.

Can anyone throw any light on the event.....I have ruled out Insomniac Ninja Paragliders [INPs] and Kamikaze refuelling ops,together with mil exercises,..so what's left...any ideas?

At 1810 gmt on Friday 22nd November a man out walking his dog witnessed the following events...

He noticed aircraft lights moving slowly from north to south,and that the a/c had only 2 lights that were yellowish in colour rather than the usual brilliant white lights that one normally sees.

He continues..' I noticed that these lights were not front and rear but were spaced in such a way that I concluded that it must have a light on each wing.The body of the aircraft was completely invisible because it was pitch dark.No strobe light of any description was visible.

I would have thought no more of it , but then I noticed three sets of aircraft lights approaching from the North West.I was surprised because of the seeming close proximity to each other.They were not in any formation I could discern but it was apparent that civilian aircraft would not be so close.I noticed that the arrangement of lights did give them a pronounced triangular shape , however the colour of the lights seemed to conform to those you normally see on aircraft when viewed at night...ie..white red and green with of course the flashing strobe.

I thought that perhaps they were Tornados with their wings in the swept back position due to the shape outlined by the lights but dismissed this because they appeared to be too slow,although travelling much faster than the first plane I had spotted..This was to the south of me now.I then observed the three aircraft change course quite radically as if they were looking for and had spotted the first a/c.They caught it up and began to circle it ,but at some distance.

Meanwhile for the first time I heard a/c noise.This attracted my attention to the East where I saw another a/c approaching and making a bee line,again for the first plane.I realised that while all this was going on I never heard a whisper of engine noise ,and yet the size of the second lot of a/c was such that they were pretty low , or or extremely huge!

The engines I could now hear were from the a/c just now entering the area,..it was prop driven but not a light a/c.The engines had that throaty hum of a multi engined cargo plane.

When I turned south again I saw the first a/c disappear into cloud followed by the second lot which had intercepted it.With that I gave up observing and returned home.

Reflecting on the incident later I concluded that I had witnessed some military exercise in which a target plane [which might explain the minimum

lighting]was intercepted using a group of fighters and a radar specialist equipped plane.

The only thing that gives it a bit of mystery is the fact that I didnt hear the engines and yet I should have done because they were not above the cloud base,which from memory wasn't all that great that night...and if these were at a great altitude they were certainly bigger than Jumbos!Also I heard the last plane quite clearly and from a long way off and it appeared to be at the same altitude.

Then there was the pronounced triangular pattern to the lights,could this be what people are seeing?"

Location...Oswaldtwistle.Lancs [about 20 miles East of Warton.]

In a follow up to the above, I thought that some of you may be interested in the following which I received from a friend:-

- 1 A small 30ft black triangular craft has been seen by members of the public on the ground at WARTON (British Aerospace)
- 2 It is believed that it is a prototype UAV, designated HALO and can perform up to 9G turns.
- 3 It has been seen by numerous people in the Meols Cop, Banks and Hesketh Bank areas north of Southport.
- 4 Test flights are accompanied by a tornado, callsign "Tarnish 3"
- 5 A D-Notice has been served on the BBC warning it NOT to report on Britains Stealth program.
- 6 A larger triangular craft is in operation over Britain and has been seen at Boscombe Down.

I would be interested if anyone has any comments about the above.

Roland

[U5]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: The People newspaper  
Date: 10th November 1996

DEFENCE MINISTER IS OPEN-MINDED ON ALIEN VISITS TO EARTH

RAF In X-File Alert!;

BYLINE: Nigel Nelson

Aliens from outer space may be visiting Britain, the Government has sensationally admitted.

In an incredible letter obtained by The People, Defence Minister Earl Frederick Howe reveals that ALL RAF station commanders are under orders to report UFO sightings.

And he adds: "So far as the existence of extraterrestrial lifeforms is concerned we remain open-minded." The letter was sent to Don Valley Labour MP Martin Redmond, who is trying to break the MoD's veil of secrecy over flying saucers.

He is concerned about a UFO with a red and green rotating light that appeared over East Anglia last month.

It was tracked by radar at RAF Neatishead and RAF Northwood for several hours as it hovered in the sky before flying 50 miles down the coast.

It was also spotted by the crews of a tanker and civilian plane, while a video - now in the MoD's hands - was taken by police.

"It's incredible no aircraft were scrambled when a target was picked up so close to the coast," Mr Redmond told Defence Secretary Michael Portillo.

"This raises questions on the way we police the UK Air Defence Region."

Earl Howe replied that the RAF does not respond unless there is evidence UK air space has been "compromised". He added: "To date no

sighting has provided such evidence.

"We do not investigate further or provide an explanation for what might have been observed."

Mr Redmond is accusing the Government of covering up information on UFOs and says if there is no defence threat, there is no excuse for secrecy either.

"The answers I've been given lead me to think there is something more to this," added the MP.

"The only thing I know for sure is this whole issue is shrouded in secrecy." Last week Defence Minister Nicholas Soames refused to reveal how many UFOs RAF pilots have spotted since 1966. He said the information would cost too much to obtain.

But he added: "Unidentified contacts penetrating UK airspace are identified by all available means, including interception."

[U5]\*\*\*\*\*

uk.ufo.nw says: Here is a little more to wet your appetite.

From: "Terry Colvin" <colvint@fhu.disa.mil>  
Date: 4th December 1996

British Stealth - a report

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Forward Header

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Date: Tue, 22 Oct 1996 09:46:30 -0100  
To: skunk-works@gaia.ucs.orst.edu  
From: John Burtenshaw <jburtens@bournemouth.ac.uk>  
Subject: British Stealth - a report.

[snip]

There appears to be something strange flying around North West England.. so strange that the folks who live on the Lancashire coast are winding themselves into a frenzy over sightings..."UFO" sightings.

Now we all know this can't be, but...there is substance in the various reports, and they all seem to indicate a dark triangular shape, with the ability to hover, and climb away at high speed.

[snip]

Now here is what I found on dejanews:

[begins]  
Subject: Black Triangle Conspiracy  
From: Timothy Waters <tim@frwaters.demon.co.uk>  
Date: 1996/11/30  
Newsgroups: alt.alien.research

I have just finished reading a british UFO magazine Called UFO Reality and would like to bring a small article to your attention concerning The Black Triangle UFO's

the article is as follows

A top BBC executive let slip recently that there is a D-Notice on media reporting of the so called 'Black Triangle'.

The executive- who cannot be named is the former producer of a very popular BBC science program. He told one of our team that the black triangular 'craft' first witnessed by hundreds in the Hudson Valley region of the United States(1988/1989) then by thousands in belgium (1989/90) and more recently by thousands more in britain, has been "heavily D-Noticed" by the government. For this reason the BBC will not be reporting on the enigmatic craft, no matter how many reports they recieve. According to the former 'science program' producer the reason the government has seen fit to slap a restrictive notice on reporting of the triangle is because so far as the government has secretly informed the BBC the craft is part of a new secret military project, and as such must be protected under the secrecy laws. If this is the case, however, it surely begs the question:

If the so called Black Triangle is a secret military aircraft, then what is it doing hovering over residential areas and frightening people half

to death. Like the BBC licensing agenda something somewhere simply does not add up...

[W1]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: The Express newspaper  
Date: Monday 18th November 1996

### Mission Impossible

Russians quest for Mars last 75 minutes as rocket misfires

by John Ingham

Russia joined the space race for Mars yesterday - and promptly lost.

Within minutes of blast-off on the 48 million-mile quest to find new life on the planet, the Mars 96 spacecraft shot out of control into the Earth's orbit when the fourth stage of its launch rocket misfired.

And with it went 300 million pounds [sterling] of technology and 10 years hard work by scientists, some of them British.

Mars 96 is now expected to burn up on its return to Earth in 30 days, instead of coming back in 10 months with vital information about the Red Planet.

There were fears last night that bits of the spacecraft could crash to Earth and put people at risk.

The craft's thermoelectric probes are powered by radioactive plutonium which could survive reentry into the Earth's atmosphere.

Just one particle of the dust would be enough to cause cancer.

John Pike, Washington-based director of the Space Policy Project said: "The worst case scenario is that the probes burn up and scatter plutonium dust into the atmosphere.

"If anyone breathed just a speck of that dust they would get lung cancer.

"The good news is that these probes are very small, the Earth is very large, and there is no danger of a nuclear explosion."

Contact was lost with the craft 75 minutes into the mission.

The disaster could wreck plans for a US-Russian Mars mission to drill for fossilised life-forms in 2001.

Global interest has intensified since claims earlier this year that evidence of life on Mars had been found.

Professor David Southwood, Head of Physics at Imperial College London, who helped develop some of the craft's equipment, said: "I'm only just coming to terms with it. It is very hard to get to Mars. How do you feel when you've lost 10 years work just like that?"

It was Russia's first deep space mission since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

But it was already lagging behind NASA which launched the 133 million pounds [sterling] Mars Global Surveyor 10 days ago to relay high resolution maps of the planets surface.

Next month, NASA will send the 100 million pounds [sterling] Mars Pathfinder complete with a six-wheel buggy to carry out atmospheric tests.

But last night scientists at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan were struggling to find out what had destroyed their hopes of glory.

Mission control specialist Anatoly Yeremenk said: "We don't know what happened yet."

[W2]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: The Express newspaper  
Date: Monday 18th November 1996

To Baldly go where no man has gone before

The worlds oldest astronaut blasts off into space tomorrow.

Story Musgrave, a 61-year-old Texan, will hurtle around the Earth at 17,500 mph on the Columbia space shuttle.

The bald ex-marine is in quarantine at Kennedy Space Centre in Florida, preparing for his sixth and final mission.

Looking back over his 30-year career, he said yesterday: "I feel exceedingly rewarded."

Musgrave qualified as an astronaut in 1967 - a year before Neil Armstrong took man's first steps on the Moon. If he had been a pilot, he would have had to retire a year ago. But NASA dropped its age limit on astronauts in 1978 after concluding it didn't really matter.

Musgrave, who has six college degrees in disciplines as varied as medicine and literature, dreamed of flying to Mars when he started out. But he said he had no regrets.

The oldest spaceman on active service is 66-year-old moon walker John Young. But he has not flown since 1983. Musgrave will equal his record of six space flights.

[W3]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: The Express newspaper  
Date: Saturday 16th November 1996

Out of our world!

Ian Robinson on the history of Unidentified Flying Objects

In 1952, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill asked the question: "What does all this stuff about flying saucers amount to? What is the truth?"

Thousands of observers have reported Unidentified Flying Objects. Many claim to have had encounters with aliens and despite the best efforts of enthusiasts such as Agents Mulder and Scully in TV's The X-Files, the subject remains shrouded in mystery and speculation.

Some are convinced that we are visited by extra-terrestrial beings and that this is being covered up by governments. Other seek alternative explanations for UFOs. Could they be unmanned satellites from far-off galaxies? Do they have a natural explanation? Or are they all in the mind?

UFOs have a long history. In Biblical times the Prophet Ezekiel described a dramatic "sighting", and Pliny (AD 23-79) spoke of "burning shields" and "flying torches". Mediaeval chroniclers described strange "comets" and unusual lights in the sky. More recent reports of UFOs have become increasingly specific, with suggestions of airships, planes and flying saucers.

The flying saucer is a relatively modern phenomenon. The term was first used in 1947 to describe mysterious objects observed by a pilot, Kenneth Arnold, over mountains in Washington State.

Struck by their incredible speed, he thought they must be military jets or missiles, but their crescent shape and erratic path led him to describe them as flying "like a saucer would if you flipped it across the water".

Flying saucers had arrived.

By the end of 1947, 850 UFO sightings had been listed. Today, more than 10,000 mysterious sightings are reported each year. But what can they be?

Most ufologists accept that 95 per cent of sightings can be explained as stars, planets, experimental planes, refuelling aircraft, spy-balloons and optical illusions.

Other explanations include cloud formations, ball lightning, earth lights which are caused by rocks under tectonic stress, and skylights which are emissions from thunderstorms. This leaves five per cent of UFO sightings unaccounted for.

Belief in extra-terrestrial visitors became so widespread that

government agencies began to monitor UFO reports and investigate their cause.

Public concern at the threat of invading aliens was certainly real - and never more so than in the famous Orson Welles 1938 broadcast of HG Wells's *The War Of The Worlds*, which many Americans mistook for the real news instead of radio drama.

In the same year that Kenneth Arnold described his flying saucers, an American newspaper claimed that one had crash-landed near an air force base in Roswell, New Mexico.

The story was first confirmed, then denied by officials. In 1994, the US government admitted that there had been a crash at Roswell but claimed it was a spy-balloon, not a flying saucer.

Speculation was stoked by spectacular film, allegedly discovered in 1995, which claimed to show a 1947 autopsy on an alien spaceman. But as Marc Gascoigne notes in *The UFO Investigator's Handbook* (Puffin 3 pounds 99 pence Stirling), "The video is almost certainly a hoax".

A more recent claim of crash-landing came from Suffolk. On December 27th 1980, a radar station at RAF Watton tracked a flying object over Rendlesham Forest. American guards at nearby RAF Woodbridge spotted lights in the trees and went to investigate.

According to Gascoigne, "A clearing had been smashed in the trees. A metallic, triangular object hovered in the clearing, emitting a dazzling white light. It was two to three metres across and two metre tall. The men ventured closer. It moved away into the trees. Next morning, three depressions were found in the ground, and background radiation in the area had doubled."

In 1961, Betty and Barney Hill saw a bright light in the sky while driving one night and thought it may have been a UFO. Under hypnosis they claimed to have been abducted by aliens who took them aboard their spaceship.

Other accounts of abduction include lumberjack Travis Walton, who had inexplicably disappeared for five days in 1975, and author Whitley Strieber (*Communion*, 1987) who claims to have been abducted by aliens on several occasions.

A more benign account of contact with aliens was given in George Adamski's *Flying Saucers Have Landed* (1953) originally written as fiction, then published, more lucratively, as "fact".

Winston Churchill's question remains unanswered but, whatever the truth, the history of UFOs certainly supports HG Wells's conclusion to *The War Of The Worlds*: "We have learned now that we cannot regard this planet as being fenced in and a secure abiding-place for Man: we can never anticipate the unseen good or evil that may come upon us suddenly out of space."

The movies: One place you can be sure of seeing UFOs is at the cinema. Their extra-terrestrial crews have been portrayed as warlike aggressors, emissaries of peace or simply stranded travellers. Cinema images now influence "eye-witness" accounts of UFOs to the extent that it is impossible to detach fact from fiction...

*The Day The Earth Stood Still* (1951): A spaceman has come to warn Earth of the dangers of atomic weapons and space exploration. Hostile troops open fire, destroying a unique opportunity for inter-galactic understanding.

*The Thing From Another World* (1951): An alien craft is found frozen in ice at the North Pole. The "thing" inside is allowed to thaw out - and poses a terrible threat to the whole of mankind.

*The War Of The Worlds* (1953): HG Wells's classic tale of Martian invaders, transferred to present-day America.

*2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968): Earth is a distant colony of an advanced civilisation responsible for our history, from cavemen to astronauts.

*The Man Who Fell To Earth* (1976): David Bowie is an alien visitor in search of a precious resource his planet desperately needs...water.

*Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* (1977): Extraordinary visual images and a strong sense of wonderment when mankind finally confronts incontrovertible evidence of extra-terrestrial visitors.

ET: The Extra-Terrestrial (1982): Stranded peaceable alien is befriended by children, but faces unwelcome curiosity from UFO researchers.

V (1984-85) TV series): Pleasant human-seeming people are really nasty, mice-eating, alien reptiles.

Independence Day (1996): Back to ballistics as hostile aliens declare war on Earth.

[W4]\*\*\*\*\*

From: Duncan@life.com  
Source: Focus magazine  
Date: September 1996

Aliens

With the movie Independence Day bringing ETs into the limelight once again, Focus speculates on what sort of creatures might really be lurking out there...

By Sean Blair

Britain's top astronomer was furious - and a little frightened. Astronomer Royal Sir Martin Ryle believed what had happened would lead to only one thing; alien invasion!

The year was 1974, and Ryle had just learnt that the American National Astronomy and Ionosphere Centre had sent out a welcome message from its radio telescope at Arecibo, Puerto Rico, aimed at the constellation Hercules.

Ryle's response was immediate. Didn't the fools know what they were doing? He drafted an angry letter to the International Astronomy Union, demanding that no such message ever be transmitted again and asking them to officially condemn such hazardous actions. In an unknown and potentially hostile universe, Earth had drawn attention to itself, letting malevolent aliens know just where to find us.

The IAU never did condemn such transmissions. It was left to Frank Drake, director of the centre and pioneer of the Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI) initiative to explain that it was too late for future Nobel prize-winner Ryle to worry anyway. Radio and TV signals have already announced our presence to our galactic neighbourhood - to this day. Dixon of Dock Green and I Love Lucy are still speeding outwards at the speed of light.

Besides, Drake argued, any alien race that achieved interstellar travel would be sufficiently developed to reject war and aggression.

Drake speculates elsewhere that aliens are quite likely to have discovered the secret of immortality and other scientific gifts they will gladly share with their newly discovered terrestrial neighbours. Ryle never replied to Drake's letter.

This one sided exchange is interesting as it demonstrates the variety of opinion on what "they" might be like, if "they" are out there at all.

In medieval times, the skies were believed to be peopled by angels and devils. Our knowledge has grown exponentially since, but our view of alien entities still tends to centre on either benevolent superbeings or prospective evil invaders.

Until we get what SETI enthusiasts refer to as "The Signal", we cannot guess exactly what an alien would be like. The centuries of speculation about extraterrestrials tend to reveal more about ourselves than ETs.

Serious scientific discussion about aliens really began in 1959, with the publication in Nature of an article suggesting signalling to aliens by microwave and, the following year, Frank Drake's first radio telescope scans of nearby stars to detect extraterrestrial signals.

Before finding anything, you must decide what you're looking for - so SETI scientists have spent a lot of time over the past 30 years working out what aliens around any of the estimated 40 billion trillion stars in the universe might be like.

They are almost certain to use radio to communicate across interstellar distances, and they would be carbon-based, like all life as we know it.

Carbon is the only atom capable of forming sufficiently complex molecules to create life. Water would also be necessary for the biochemical reactions comprising living systems. It is assumed that aliens will be composed of individual biological cells broadly similar to our own.

In fact, NASA's Global Surveyor mission to Mars, to be launched in 1998, will look for calcium carbonate "skeletons" that could have been left by cells of micro-organisms, checking a theory that life once started on the Red Planet, too, but died before evolving as Mars began to grow cold and inhospitable.

While the exact nature of aliens is unknown, they must have ways of taking in nourishment, moving and reproducing and some sort of organ that houses intelligence.

Thought has also been given to the character of alien civilisations. Russian astronomer Nikolai Kardashev introduced a classification system in the 1960s that has become SETI standard. Human civilisation is a comparatively puny Type One civilisation, just about up to exploiting the energy capability of planet Earth. But maturer civilisations could reach Type Two using the entire energy of their home star - or even Type Three, involving colonisation and exploitation of whole galaxies.

Around the same time, Frank Drake put together an equation to work out the number of alien species broadcasting in our galaxy. Taking into account all possible contributory factors, the Drake Equation has yielded answers varying from 10 million alien civilisations to a more modest few thousand.

Waiting for "Wow!"

So where are they? There have been numerous "answers" to the "Fermi paradox" since it was posed by Italian physicist and Manhattan Project member Enrico Fermi. Physicist Frank Tipler argues only enormous chance allowed life on Earth to arise - expecting it to happen twice is just too much to ask.

Or perhaps Earth is just out of step with our alien neighbours. We might have to wait millions of years for them to evolve - or else they are already extinct; perhaps all intelligent civilisations eventually destroy themselves, by war or by accident.

The idea that we are in space quarantine, either for our own good or theirs is a popular argument. As J G Ballard commented gloomily after the lunar landing, "If I was a Martian, I'd start running now."

Another possibility is that alien races are observing radio silence to avoid the attentions of predators - either hostile aliens or autonomous self-replicating probe robots (perhaps even sentient computer viruses existing as microwaves) hungry for raw materials and real estate. The existence of just one such threat might be enough to silence the galaxy - apart from naive young worlds like ours, broadcasting happily away.

Anyway, it isn't quite true to say SETI efforts have heard nothing for the past 35 years. There have been hundreds of suspect signals received - most famously the regular signal, originating from at least lunar distance and detected at Ohio State University Observatory in 1977.

This has gone down in SETI history as the 'Wow!' signal - from what the supervising astronomer wrote in the margin of the computer printout. These and other such unrepeatable signals - SETI researchers call them "bumps in the night" - fit well with the idea of alien microwave communication - but unfortunately, they also fit more mundane explanations: secret military satellite transmitting on illegal frequencies, reflections from space debris or equipment malfunction

But if The Signal does come for sure, will there be anyone still listening? Under pressure from a cost cutting Congress, NASA ended SETI research in 1993. Private research is precariously funded and Scientists have been reduced to appealing for money over the Internet. The Ohio State Telescope being pulled down this year - to make way for a golf course. At a time when interest in aliens is greater than ever

- and the discovery of complex organic molecules and new worlds in deep space make their existence more likely - our chances of knowing for certain if they exist are getting slighter.

How aliens have always been in our nightmares

Notions of non-human intelegences stretch back thousands of years. The flrst imagined were animist nature sptrits of mountains, forests, rivers and seas. And a few of these spirits developed into gods.

With its waxing and waning dominating the night sky, the moon was naturally engrined in godhood by many cultures, and its movements became the basis of all calendars.

The Greek philosopher Anaxagoras, in the fifth century BC, was the first to suggest the moon might not be another being but a world like the earth-and an inhabited one to boot. His opinion was later endorsed by the historian Plutarch and the writer Lucian. His A Tru History written in AD 165, has a hero carried to the moon by a whirlwind to meet the distinctly human lunar king and queen, who are warring over the colonisation of Jupiter.

The Renaissance marked a renewal of interest in the universe beyond Earth. The Italian writer Ariosto described a trip to an inhabited moon (this time via the fiery chariot of Elijah) in his 1532 poem Orlando Furioso. But while it was acceptable to suggest in fiction there were habitable worlds besides the Earth, saying so as fact was unwise.

Six decades on from Ariosto, the Italian monk Giordano Bruno declared, "Innumerable suns exist; innumerable earth's revolve about these suns... Living humans inhabit these worlds." The Catholic Church called on him to recant this cosmological heresy. When he refused, they burnt him at the stake.

But, a few years later, the invention of the telescope revealed the moon as an earthlike place, with mountains, craters and "seas", and spurring on speculation about life on other worlds Cyrano de Bergerac penned Voyages to the Moon and the Sun in 1647, and a pair of English bishops, Francis Godwin and John Wilkins, wrote their own visions of life on the moon -inhabited by inteligent human beings, as usual.

As astronomical knowledge progressed, the airless moon was abandoned as a possible home of life - although as late as 1835 the New York Sun newspaper claimed astronomers had seen flowers, trees and unicorns on the lunar surface.

This still left the rest of our solar system, however. In 1796 astronomer Pierre Simon de LaPace formulated the theory that it originated out of a gradually cooling cloud of gas, with the furthest planets in the solar system condensing first.

This meant the further from the sun a planet was, the older it was. It followed then that cloud-covered Venus was a young version of Earth literally a virgin world - while Mars, with its thin atmosphere, was seen as an elderly, dying planet.

Despite this, Mars was considered through out the 19th century as a probable abode of alien life. It had icy poles, suggestive of water, and seasonal movements of dark and light across its surface that were interpreted as vegetation - possibly cultivated fields. And then there were the canals...

In 1877 Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli was the first to see what we now know to be the optical illusions of dark channels stretching across the Martian landscape, but it was American Percival Lowell who made them his own.

*>From his private observatory in Arizona he mapped more than 500 hundred canals, crossing at dark spots dubbed "oasis".*

Despite objections from other astronomers that they couldld see nothing, Lowell depicted, in books such as 'Mars as the Abode of Life', an advanced but dying Martian civilisation, combating the drying out of their world with global irrigation.

There were already many suggestions on how we should contact our potential neighbours.

Back in 1820 German mathematician Karl Gauss had suggested cutting a huge and bizarre pattern of Pythagorean triangles into the forest of

Siberia, while 50 years later, French physicist Charles Cros mooted the idea of a network of sunlight-reflecting mirrors stretched across Europe.

In the 1890s psychics also got in on the act, claiming they had already made mental contact with denizens of the Red Planet.

#### Mystery radio signals

The new medium or radio was also pressed into service, with both Marconi and Tesla briefly believing they had picked up signals from Mars or elsewhere. (In fact, what they had heard were "whistlers" long-lasting electromagnetic waves produced by lightning flashes.)

Then, in the years following Lowell's death in 1916, studies of the Martian atmosphere showed it was colder than Antarctica, and too thin for any human-like form to breathe. Shifting colours on the surface were revealed as simply dust storms, and "canals" as tricks of the light.

The culture of the 19th century had constructed an imaginary civilisation in its own image. In the age of the Panama and Suez canals, canal-building was seen as the hallmark of an advanced civilisation.

The Martians were gone, but not forgotten. They lived on in the books of such authors as H G Wells and Edgar Rice Burroughs, and the fledging genre of "scientificfiction". And the "Greys" of today's ufology are the great-grandchildren of 19th century Martians; with their wizened, spindly limbs, enlarged heads and apparent obsession with reproduction, they'd fit in perfectly on the low-gravity plains of Lowell's dying Mars.

Martians made a brief reappearance in 1938, when Orson Welles' New Jersey-set radio version of War of the Worlds caused mass hysteria among its audience, already disturbed by rumours of war.

The next time aliens entered popular culture was the 1950s when flying saucer sightings gave people something else to worry about besides the Cold War. But whatever they are, belief in ET visitors has never gone away. Forty years ago they were responsible for banal but well-meaning speeches about the dangers of nuclear energy. Today, they're stronger on random kidnapping and sexual assault than chit-chat-the perfect reflection, perhaps, of the Nervous Nineties.

#### Watchers of the kies: the alien hunters

Slashing NASA's SETI budget reduced the US deficit by just 0.0006 per cent but dealt a crushing blow to the alien hunters (the only country now sponsoring SETI efforts is Argentina). However, SETI has bounced back with the setting up of several private sector groups, including the New Jersey based SETI League and the SETI Foundation in California.

The SETI League has announced a new all-sky SETI programme, Project Argus, beginning in 1997, which will use thousands of mini-satellite dishes set up by volunteers across the world. The SETI Foundation is also overseeing a search called Project Phoenix from Australia, targeting 200 stars, while the University of California at Berkeley is carrying on its long-running SERENDIP (Search for Extraterrestrial Radio Emmisions from Nearby Developed Intelligent Populations) project, with help from sponsors including scientist Carl Sagan.

Not that SETI enthusiasts have devoted all resources to the airwaves: some believe that aliens will be found by sighting actual artefacts, such as Dyson Spheres - gigantic constructs surrounding individual suns - which will give off distinctive and detectable infrared patterns.

Another theory is that aliens will communicate by high powered lasers. Astronomer Stuart Kingsland has built a telescope in Ohio with a photon-counter to find laser pulses between the nearest 1,000 stars.

#### Making an alien: imagining life on the moon of 70 Virginis

A new planet, discovered last January around the star 70 Virginis, excited interest because its position suggested that water - and therefore life - could have developed there. But what would such life be like?

Life as we envisage it couldn't develop on the planet itself, which is similar to Jupiter but 6.4 times as big, though probably also has solid moons.

Imagine an Earth-sized moon orbiting the planet every 2.6 days. With an orbital radius of one million km, it's distant enough to escape being broken up by the planet's massive gravity.

One side of the moon always faces towards the planet, and is distorted by tidal forces.

Resultant crustal cracking may have spewed out hot gases to form an atmosphere, as well as water (some of which also came from comet impacts) creating an ocean, and volcanic minerals providing raw materials for carbon-based life forms.

70 Virginis is three billion years older than our sun, so life here has had twice as long to evolve. Micro-organisms feeding on undersea volcanic vents could develop into larger organisms. Evolution could be spurred on by a high mutation rate caused by radiation from the planet.

The planet's temperature and pressure is extremely high - water would have a boiling point of well over 100 degrees C here - so "Virginians" might be small and spiky to vent excess heat, with eyes and frond-like tentacles in all directions to locate nutrients.

Tidal forces could leave part of the moon high and dry every 1.3 days, causing Virginians to evolve a hard shell to prevent themselves being dried out - as well as intelligence to cope with the ever-changing environment.

The Virginians could maybe link brains via tentacles. The bigger the problem, the more join together. Alone, they are perhaps as clever as a cat; a dozen of them together, far more intelligent than a human being.

The alien makers

A hideous, slimy tentacled space invader staggers out of the Area 51 Lab - one of the stars of the 60 million dollar SFX-fest, Independence Day. But while you wouldn't want to meet monster maker Patrick Troughton's creation in a dark alley, like all movie invaders, they're really not alien enough.

Even H R Giger's famous Alien design owes its shock factor to humanoid aspects. Taking a leaf out of Freud's book, he made the creature's various stages of life resemble human genitalia, from its vulva-style egg to the phallic head of the adult alien. Giger's latest work will be revealed this autumn, with the release of the latest Star Trek film, First Contact. He has redesigned the Borg, the alien from the Next Generation TV show, to make it look less human. The Borks use time travel to change history and destroy the Federation.

In reality, any humanoid aliens will be in extremely short supply. The chances of another planet producing the same genetic sequence as ourselves is an estimated  $5 \times 10$  to the power of 16,557,000 - enough digits to fill over a thousand pages of Focus.

Written science fiction has yielded some more credible aliens than films, but there are still limitations. SF writer and physicist Stephen Baxter has created some of the most original aliens of the past few years, including creatures made from dark matter and enormous beings made from the turbulent cells of a boiling ocean, but he argues that it is among the hardest things for a writer to do.

"My feeling is that real alien races will be just that: alien," says Baxter. "You only have to look at our 'cousins' on Earth, like the fossil creatures of the Burgess Shale, to see that."

Imagining the way an alien might think and communicate is a real barrier.

"I think communication will be much more difficult than we think - second only to the problem of recognising something as alive in the first place."

If you're looking for a credible alien, you should go to a xenobiologist like Jack Cohen, who works out how aliens would evolve. Xenobiologists ask themselves how evolution would solve problems presented by certain environments - high gravity worlds might

give rise to flat, armoured creatures, while gas planets might serve as home to balloon-like "floaters".

The results of Cohen's studies have appeared in novels by Larry Niven and Brian Aldiss - but Cohen the script for any resulting movie would be dull.

"I'm sure aliens would be so different as to make interaction with humans unlikely," he says.

What happens when we finally hear The Signal...?

The '50s comics made it look so easy. The head alien steps out of his saucer parked on the White House lawn and says, "Take me to your leader!"

In real life, any communication is likely to come by radio, not rocket ship, but what then?

To address that question, a document called Declaration of Principles Concerning Activities Following the Detection of Extraterrestrial Intelligence was approved in 1989 by the International Academy of Astronautics and a host of other astronomy organisations.

It says information on any alien signal should be promptly released to other researchers and, once verified, to the entire world. When it comes to replying, it specifies that no return signal be sent until international consultations take place.

This is usually taken to mean that the decision on whether to reply (and what to say) should be made by the United Nations, although it is arguable whether a unanimous decision on such a momentous issue would be reached. The design of the alien greeting plaque sent on Pioneers 10 and 11 led to controversy in 1972. Because the plaque showed a naked couple, NASA was accused by some of sending smut into space. The cultural and political divides that would open up debating the contents of a reply to aliens would undoubtedly be far greater.

Astronomer Patrick Moore, among others, has urged that all politicians be left out of it - while Alabama sociologist Donald Tartar suggests those who first detect a signal immediately reply with a code word. The code will also identify all future messages from the discoverers, so the aliens will know which ones are worth listening to.

The other question pondered by SETI researchers about First Contact is the risk of profound culture shock. The extreme differentness of aliens might drive us to collective xenophobia or, if their achievements are sufficiently ahead of ours, we might plunge into a despairing apathy so severe it might mean extinction.

[W5]\*\*\*\*\*

From: NASANews@hq.nasa.gov

Subject: Station's First Module Assembled\; Ready for Testing  
Date: Monday 9th December 1996

STATION'S FIRST MODULE ASSEMBLED; READY FOR TESTING

The first major component of the International Space Station (ISS) has been completed on schedule and on budget.

Russia's Khrunichev Industries, working under contract to NASA's ISS prime contractor, The Boeing Company, has completed assembly of the Functional Cargo Block, or FGB, which will be launched in one year and will provide initial power and propulsion for the ISS.

The FGB, a 20-ton pressurized spacecraft, will be launched on a Russian Proton vehicle in November 1997.

"The first piece of Space Station is on track and will be ready to launch in just twelve months," said Virginia Barnes, FGB program manager. "The people of Khrunichev worked hard to make this happen, and we are all excited to be playing such a crucial role in this new chapter of space exploration."

In May 1997, the FGB will be transported from Moscow to

the Baikonur launch complex, where it will undergo final checkout and testing, and be mated to the Proton rocket.

"Most of the subsystem hardware has been installed including the propulsion system, the onboard computers, lighting power supply, solar array orientation system, thermal controls, fire detection, and guidance, navigation and control," said Barnes. "The subsystems will now undergo functional testing until the FGB is transported to the launch site."

A week after the FGB launch, an interconnecting node module, built by Boeing in Huntsville, AL, will be launched from the Kennedy Space Center, FL, aboard a Space Shuttle. Astronauts will link the two modules in space, signaling the beginning of the largest space-based construction project in history. The FGB will provide orbital control, communications and power to the node.

During this period, the FGB will control the motion and define the altitude of the Station's orbit. Later in the assembly sequence of the Station, as additional modules are added, the FGB will serve as a storage and experimentation facility. In addition, its external fuel tanks will continue to be used throughout the lifetime of the Station.

"This is an exciting time for the FGB team," said Barnes. "In the next 12 months we will be preparing to launch and to unite our two countries in building the International Space Station."

In August 1995, Boeing Defense & Space Group and Russia's Khrunichev State Research and Production Space Center, signed a \$190 million contract for all phases of development and production of the spacecraft.

[W6]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: Mufon UFO Journal  
Date: November 1996

#### THE ORDEAL OF JOHN FORD

by Elaine Douglass

The arrest June 12 of Long Island New York UFO activist John Ford is deeply troubling. Founder in the mid-80s of the Long Island UFO Network (LIUFON), Ford became known for his relentless investigations of UFO events and for his startling allegations that alien craft had come down on Long Island three times in recent years and been retrieved by federal and local authorities.

The Suffolk County Long Island Police Department is one of the agencies John accused. John said the police helped recover a fiery object witnesses told John came down in Long Island's Southaven Park in 1992. John made this claim at public meetings up and down Long Island, and he held a demonstration at Police Headquarters.

About a year ago scary things started happening to John Ford. He repeatedly phoned friends and said someone was harassing him and maybe, he thought, trying to kill him. Was there a campaign to destabilize John Ford?

If so, it reached its climax June 12, when John was arrested in a sting operation involving phone taps and a "wired" paid informant. Police charged John with conspiracy to murder and possession of radium without a license. Suffolk DA James Catterson told news reporters John Ford planned to murder an individual by the name of John Powell, head of the Suffolk County Republican Party, by putting radioactive radium in his toothpaste.

An improbable charge, to put it mildly. Nonetheless, the DA seemed unable to restrain himself in the media following John's arrest. He sponsored two press conferences, compared John to the Unabomber, and made additional charges against John for which no indictments were subsequently returned. Amid a flood of sensational news, John's bail was set at half a million dollars. Naturally, he hasn't been able to raise it.

In the meantime, the UFO community, unused to investigators being arrested and charged with crimes, has met this unsettling drama with a

stunned silence. Nor has John, on advice of his attorney, issued any state- ment in his own defense other than his plea of not guilty.

Not mentioned in the newspapers was John's claim of harassment, of himself and others in LIUFON: auto accidents (too many), vandalism of cars, and a physical at- tack on LIUFON member Joe Mazzuchelli, who was arrested with John June 12. Mazzuchelli says last winter four men dragged him out of John's truck, beat him up, and warned him to "stay out of our busi- ness.

Such are the allegations in this case. What is the truth? Is UFO investigator John Ford a potential murderer? Or is John the victim of a political arrest? Was he set up by people local to the Island or higher-people who got a little tired of John Ford's inces- sant allegations?

What were John's allegations? As any- one familiar with John knows, they were radical. For example, John believed that in 1989 Americans forced down an alien craft over Moriches Bay Long Island. He believed that in 1992 an alien craft crashed in Southhaven Park on the Island. And he considered the possibility that in 1995 another mysterious object came to earth in the Pine Barrens area of the Island and that "diversionary fires" were set to dis- tract public attention.

John claimed the technology used to down the alien craft in 1989 came from Brookhaven National Laboratory on the Island. Based on his sightings investiga- tions, John concluded UFOs were making regular flights over populated Hudson Valley and Long Island, much to the con- sternation of the coverup, which decided to do something about it. John further believed the Long Island police, fire, parks and other local agencies were commandeered by the federals to assist in these emergency opera- tions and then, naturally, gagged.

John claimed he had "sources" in the Police and Fire Departments who privately told him information on which he built his cases. And there were non-confidential wit- nesses, members of the public, who told John, for example, about a fireball coming to earth in Southhaven Park, about fire truck and police cars that night, and that the Park was closed afterward. Yet the Fire and Police Departments denied it and the Park director said the Park was never closed. The details of John's cases are too numerous to cover here, but one treatment of the Moriches Bay case can be found in Len Stringfield's Status Report VI.

The thing about John was he wouldn't shut up. He went all over Long Island talk- ing about a coverup of UFO events in which local authorities were deeply implicated. John founded LIUFON about 1985. From then on, he maintained a hot line. He inves- tigated sightings and abductions. He held public meetings. He talked to the press. He sponsored conferences. He held demonstra- tions, he published a newsletter, he leaflet- ted. John was tireless. I know John Ford, and he is the most determined UFO investi- gator I ever met.

He also has flaws, plenty of them. He is stubborn, for example. Yet John Ford's friends all attest he lived a moral life and never, as far as anyone can remember, threatened another person with bodily harm. According to John's attorney, John Rouse of Central Islip, "You can't believe how many people have called me to say they can't en- vision John Ford killing anyone, or even conceiving the intention."

Murder wasn't in John's character, peo- ple say, and breaking the law wasn't John's style. John Ford was a law and order advo- cate who spent most of his career as a Court Officer in the Suffolk County court system. John knew the law and how to use it. John was litigious, not violent. If John Ford had a gripe against you, he'd sue you in a minute.

Nor is John stupid. Even the Suffolk DA called John a "mastermind." If John was go- ing to kill someone, would he use radium? It hardly kills people fast. Readers will re- call the famous radium dial painters of the 1920s who licked radium paint brushes for 40 years before they got cancer.

Yet the DA would have us believe that John's "murder weapon" was radium. Toothpaste goes fast in a household of four people, like that of alleged murder target John Powell. Was Ford going to break in and put radium in Powell's toothpaste every week for 40 years until Powell got cancer?

And would an individual who thought people were watching him leave illegal ra- dium in the back of a pickup truck in front of his house? I repeat, John knew the law.

The charges against John strain credibility, but that didn't seem to embarrass the DA. As I mentioned, Catterson was so eager to incriminate John that he made several serious charges at his press conferences for which no indictments were returned. "This," says attorney John Rouse, "is called poisoning the jury pool."

Catterson's overstep raises questions: Did the DA believe he had more evidence against John than he ended up with? How good is the remaining evidence? Is it possible the DA never thought he had evidence to convict John of anything, and that instead, the purpose of the arrest is simply to ruin John Ford's reputation and wipe him out financially with legal bills?

The purported case against John rests on the taped conversation made in John's house the night of his arrest. According to police, the wired informant engaged in conversation with John and Joe Mazzuchelli about doing away with Powell and another local politician via the radium in the tooth-paste route. After this the police, who were waiting outside, burst in and arrested John and Joe.

The tape has now been released on discovery. "It's unintelligible," says Preston Nichols, John's friend in LIUFON. "All I can clearly hear on that tape," Nichols says, "is the informant talking and John laughing like whatever they're talking about is a big joke."

Attorney John Rouse doesn't disagree. He's waiting for an "enhanced" version of the tape to see if the conversation becomes clearer. Rouse warns, however, that John's situation is serious. If a jury believes the DA's charges, John Ford could get 25-75 years at an upstate NY prison.

As for the radium, it was allegedly found outside in John's truck. Outside is where the police were, waiting and listening to the informant talking with John and Joe. Could the police have planted the radium?

And finally, unless John was to be encouraged and entrapped, why use an informant at all? If the police believed John was plotting a murder, why not bug his house for a couple of weeks and get the whole scoop? The answer might be that the purpose of the informant was to lead the conversation in an incriminating direction.

I have in my files a letter from the Suffolk County Police Department, dated April 1993. I wrote to them, at John's request, complaining about police violations of LIUFON member's civil rights. They had been leafletting near Southaven Park and going house to house looking for witnesses-constitutionally protected activity. The police stopped them and ordered them out of the area. This was the kind of thing John did, and this was the kind of response he got from the Suffolk Police, as far back as 1993.

There is plenty of reason to think the Suffolk Police were "out to get" John Ford. And no member of the UFO community can be confident they understand the arrest of John Ford if their only source of information is the sensational media reports orchestrated by the Suffolk DA.

That is why John's colleagues, including myself in Washington, DC, LIUFON vice president Steve Lavarone, and Tony West, Richard Jones, Preston Nichols, and Joe Zuppardo in New York, Don Jernigan of Ohio, and Kelly Freeman of Florida, have organized the John Ford Defense Committee. Our purpose is (1) to give people true information on the arrest of John Ford, and (2) collect funds and other resources essential for John's defense.

My support for John Ford, and the support of the other members of the Defense Committee, is based on our conviction that John did not, would not, and could not conspire to murder anyone. On this point our support is complete and total.

As for John's allegations, I speak only for myself and not for other members of the Defense Committee. I always found John's allegations hard to believe but impossible to dismiss because John had evidence and what he claimed was perfectly possible. Taken as a whole, what John Ford's claims suggest is a low intensity military conflict between the United States and the aliens. Is that possible? Yes it is.

Just because John's allegations "fit" doesn't make them true. But the fact is, John had evidence. John claimed three events on Long Island.

Even if he was wrong on two of them, if he was right on only one, John had a tiger by the tail. If so, it's no surprise somebody would try to destroy John Ford.

And there's that curious coincidence about Moriches Bay, which more than a few persons have pointed out. Moriches Bay is where John said the United States brought down an alien craft in 1989, and Moriches Bay is where TA Flight 800 mysteriously crashed in August. The cause of that crash, readers are aware, has so far eluded federal investigators, and in particular investigators are unable to explain the reports of more than 20 persons who say they saw an unaccountable light streaking toward Flight 800 before it went down.

John Ford is the first UFO investigator to be seriously persecuted by the authorities. Shall we sit idly by while our colleague's life is destroyed? If John Ford is silenced, who is next? Contact the John Ford Defense Committee at web site [www.iwaynet.net/~pic](http://www.iwaynet.net/~pic) or email [elaine26@juno.com](mailto:elaine26@juno.com)

The Committee needs funds for John's legal defense and donations of several kinds: a psychiatrist expert witness; professional audiotape analysis; and a Long Island-based legal investigator. Please also write personal letters to: John Ford (8-29-48), Suffolk County Jail, 100 Center Dr., Riverhead, NY 11901.

[W7]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: The Sunday Times newspaper  
Date: 1st December 1996

#### MOZART BREAKS THE LIGHT BARRIER

AN experiment involving the music of Mozart is said to be defying one of the fundamental laws of physics: that nothing can travel faster than light, writes Steve Connor.

Under laboratory conditions, scientists claim to have repeatedly transmitted signals, including part of Mozart's 40th symphony, at velocities far in excess of the speed of light.

The results have caused disbelief in the scientific community. If true, the findings would violate Einstein's special theory of relativity, which is a cornerstone of modern physics and our view of the universe. They would also suggest that time travel may one day be possible.

In the face of accusations that he has misinterpreted his own results, Gunter Nimtz, professor of physics at the University of Cologne, insists he has produced the first experimental evidence which can only be explained by accepting faster-than-light travel.

Nimtz said last week: "Nobody seriously does not believe our results, only our interpretation of them. They say they violate the theory of special relativity. Most of my colleagues say this is impossible."

His research involved splitting microwaves into two, sending one set through the air and the other through a specially constructed "tunnel barrier", a type of electronic filter. Those that went through the barrier travelled 4.7 times faster than those passing through the air at 670m mph, the speed of light.

The first time Nimtz performed the experiment he used simple microwaves. But scientists in America criticised his method for having no distinctive signal and therefore no way of knowing whether the results were true.

So Nimtz encoded part of Mozart's 40th symphony in microwaves. He said that the music was clearly recognisable after it had travelled 4.7 times faster than light and played a tape of it at a scientific meeting earlier this year.

However, even those experts who believe time travel may one day be possible remain sceptical.

Dr David Deutsch, a theoretical physicist from Oxford University, said: "It must be a mistake. It would be as if someone was to say that Australia wasn't there and all our apparent evidence that it was there is just wrong, without any explanation of why."

Nimtz's experiment will be shown tomorrow night in a programme in BBC2's Horizon series. On the same programme, Professor Stephen Hawking, the Cambridge theoretical physicist, acknowledges that he has shifted his opinion on time travel, although he still believes there are problems. He says: "Time travel might be possible, but if that is the case why haven't we been overrun by tourists from the future?"

[W8]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: USA Today  
Date: 2nd December 1996

#### ISRAELI SCIENTISTS: STAR COLLISION CAUSED DINOSAUR EXTINCTION

JERUSALEM - Israeli scientists have a new theory on why the dinosaurs became extinct: cosmic radiation that bombarded the Earth following the collision of two neutron stars.

Physicists from the Space Research Institute at the Technion University in Haifa theorize that the mass extinction 65 million years ago was caused by the merging of twin stars near the Earth inside the Milky Way galaxy.

This collision created a deadly wave of cosmic radiation that destroyed the protective layers of the Earth's atmosphere, frying vegetation and obliterating most animal life, the researchers say.

"The study is actually an attempt to solve the biggest murder case in the history of life on Earth," said Arnon Dar, a physics professor at the Technion, who with colleagues Nir Shaviv and Ari Lior has submitted the theory for publication in the journal Science.

There have been several theories that astral radiation caused mass extinctions.

David N. Schramm, an astrophysicist at the University of Chicago, suggested last year that exploding stars called supernovas could have caused another mass extinction - the most severe in Earth's history - that killed 95% of all life 225 million years ago.

But Dar said supernovas could not have caused all six mass extinctions that swept over the Earth in the last 650 million years - one about every 100 million years.

"The rate of supernova explosion is not great enough to explain the 100 million year extinctions," Dar said Sunday. "But the merging of neutron stars could be responsible."

Twin stars merge every day somewhere in the universe, producing radiation in the form of gamma and cosmic rays that strike the Earth's atmosphere. Usually, the stars are too far away to do any damage and the radiation is harmlessly absorbed by the ozone layer.

But occasionally - about every 100 million years by Dar's estimate - twin or binary stars collide close to Earth, producing devastating effects.

Dar's theory is "a credible idea," Schramm said. "We do know there is at least one known pair of neutron stars (near Earth) that are spiraling closer together and will indeed collide."

But that collision, he said, is at least 100,000 years away.

The dinosaurs' demise has been the subject of hot debate in scientific circles. Dar discounts the prevailing theory - supported by Schramm - that an asteroid strike in Chicxulub in Mexico's Yucatan was to blame.

Chicxulub is home to a crater more than 100 miles wide that could have been formed by a blast with the explosive power of 100 to 300 megatons of TNT. The theory holds that the asteroid crash created a huge explosion that cast enough dust and rock into the atmosphere to block out the sun, turning the Earth cold and inhospitable to all but the hardiest organisms.

Dar said this theory does not explain the great leap in biodiversity following the mass extinctions. He contends the vast amount of radiation produced by a neutron star collision explains why the number of animal and plant species increased so quickly after mass extinctions.

Those animals that survived - because of their hardiness or lack of radioactive exposure - would have produced a greater number of genetic mutations, Dar said.

Dar is now trying to determine which twin stars in the Earth's vicinity are likely to collide and potentially bring on the next mass extinction.

"In principle, we could predict almost precisely how long it will take before they merge in this lethal way," he said.

Meanwhile, both Schramm and the Israeli scientists are continuing to look for evidence of irradiated minerals in the Earth's geologic layers, signs of either a supernova or neutron star collision.

"I think the real test will be if we can find these isotopic anomalies," Schramm said. "Unless we find those, we're missing the smoking gun."

By The Associated Press

[W9]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: CNN

Date: 2nd December 1996

#### ICE ON EARTH'S MOON? PENTAGON TO REPORT FINDINGS

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- Ice has been discovered in the south pole region of Earth's moon, according to NASA's analysis of data from a probe sent there two years ago, sources said.

NASA's analysis of the terrain in that region of the moon led to the conclusion by NASA scientists and Defense Department officials, sources said. The Pentagon planned to announce the discovery at a news conference Tuesday.

The probe, known as "Clementine," was sent to the moon in 1994 and has been sending data back to scientists since. The program is funded by the Pentagon's Ballistic Missile Defense Organization, and is monitored by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The presence of ice indicates to scientists that microbial life forms on the moon might be more likely than previously thought, and that it may be easier to sustain human colonies on the moon than once believed.

The data was collected by "radio waves beamed from the Clementine spacecraft into the polar areas" of the moon's surface. The data was then transmitted back to NASA scientists on Earth.

The patch of ice is thought to be about 25 feet thick and roughly the size of a small lake or pond.

One theory suggests the ice arrived as a comet -- which is mostly ice -- that plowed into the moon at or near the south pole, an area said to be roughly twice the size of Puerto Rico and which never sees the sun. The water molecules could then have migrated south to collect in a crater.

Six visits to the moon by Apollo spacecraft turned up no known evidence of life there. Twelve men, all from the U.S., have walked on the surface of the moon, which is about 245,000 miles from the Earth.

Apollo 11 was the first to land there in 1969. Five subsequent Apollo missions successfully landed there before the moon shots were discontinued. The missions ended with Apollo 17.

[W10]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: CNN

Date: 3rd December 1996

#### ICE 'MOST LIKELY' THE STUFF IN MOON CRATER

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- Scientists went public Tuesday with some of the most exciting news about the moon in three decades -- ice "most likely" exists at the moon's sun-deprived south pole.

Scientists considered several possibilities in their efforts to confirm the substance, including an odd rock arrangement, but decided that "ice is the most likely thing," Dr. Stewart Nozette of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratories said at a Pentagon news conference.

The government was formally reporting the news, which leaked out Monday. The apparent discovery needs further confirmation, the Pentagon said.

The primary significance of the news is the discovery of water, which might support human life and provide the raw materials of rocket fuel, said Dr. Paul Spudis of the Lunar and Planetary Institute.

"Water is probably one of the most valuable strategic materials we can find in the solar system," Spudis said.

Experts believe the ice may have arrived as a comet or comets that smashed into the moon, which is made of dry rock and soil. The water may then have migrated into a deep crater at the moon's darkest part. Scientists are still studying the comets' track record for clues.

"The answers are on the moon, and they're on the moon in this dark area," Spudis said.

The patch of probable ice is thought to be about 25 feet thick and the diameter of a small pond.

It was discovered by the probe "Clementine," which was sent to the moon in 1994 and has been sending back data since. The data was collected by radio waves beamed from the Clementine into the moon's polar areas.

The Pentagon said the radio waves could distinguish ice, at least tentatively, because rocks and soil scatter the waves while the smooth surface of ice bounces them back in a coherent pattern.

The Clementine spacecraft is a \$75 million program that uses the moon as a target to test sensors and other devices for a U.S. antimissile missile defense. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration supplied a team of scientists to analyze information from it.

Apollo spacecraft and U.S. astronauts visited the moon in a series of missions from July 1969 to December 1972.

Reuters contributed to this report.

[W11]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: USA Today  
Date: 4th December 1996

#### NASA LAUNCHES MARS PROBE

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. - NASA launched a spacecraft to Mars early Wednesday carrying the first-ever interplanetary rover, a six-wheeled cart that will roam the frigid Martian surface in search of rocks.

The Mars Pathfinder began its 310 million-mile journey atop an unmanned rocket that lifted off at 1:58 a.m. It was the third try; launch attempts earlier in the week were stymied by bad weather and a computer failure.

Pathfinder is the second probe to be sent to Mars by NASA in the past month.

The Global Surveyor took off on Nov. 7, the first of 10 U.S. spacecraft to be sent to the Red Planet over the next decade in hopes of determining whether life ever existed there. A Mars spacecraft launched one week later by the Russians plummeted from orbit, adding to scientists' anxiety over the flight of Pathfinder.

If all goes well, Pathfinder should beat the slower Global Surveyor to Mars by two months, landing on July 4, 1997.

It would be the first time in 21 years that a spacecraft has landed on Mars.

The \$196 million Pathfinder, hailed by NASA as a new-wave bargain spacecraft, will aim for an ancient flood plain strewn with rocks. It will be a direct strike - no orbiting the planet first, a la the Apollo moon landings or the Viking probes.

A parachute will slow Pathfinder as it plunges through the Martian atmosphere. The parachute will drop away, and large air bags will inflate to cushion the impact.

Several hours later, the petals on the spacecraft are to unfold. Two ramps will pop out, and the 23-pound rover - named Sojourner - will amble down to examine nearby rocks and beam back information about their composition as well as color images.

NASA wanted to try this novel landing approach as practice for the all-important robotic mission planned sometime in the next decade to dig up Martian dirt and rocks - and return them to Earth.

Three-legged spacecraft like the twin Viking landers would never be able to land safely on such rocky terrain, the type of place NASA wants to ultimately scout for possible signs of life.

That strategy was reinforced in August when NASA scientists announced they had found supposed evidence of primitive life in a Mars meteorite. By coincidence, the rocks in Pathfinder's targeted landing spot are about the same age as that prized 4-billion-year-old meteorite.

NASA had until the end of December to launch Pathfinder. After that, scientists would have had to wait until late 1998 or early 1999 when Earth and Mars are back in the necessary alignment. That's when the next Mars probes will be launched.

[W12]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: New York / PRNewswire  
Date: 5th December 1996

#### ALIENS BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST, SAYS COMIC-BOOK PUBLISHER

"Aliens are getting their worst PR since the 1950's," says comic-book publisher Steve Stern. "Movies like Independence Day and Mars Attacks, and TV shows like the X-Files and Dark Skies are fueling an intense paranoia about ETs."

Stern is the writer/creator of the alien comic-book hero, Zen Intergalactic Ninja. "After ten years of publication, the Zen live-action movie is finally slated to begin production in early '97," Stern said. "With more alien hate-fests on the horizon, including Men in Black and Starship Troopers, it's imperative that movies start to present a positive image of aliens."

He says that the concept that aliens are evil is a not-so-subtle form of discrimination.

"Starting in the 50's, sci-fi flicks like Invasion of the Body Snatchers and Earth vs. the Flying Saucers projected our fear of communism onto aliens. Now that communism is no longer a threat, this alien paranoia is clearly working on a deeper level. Read: if it looks different from me, it has to be evil."

He points out that the original comic-book alien -- Superman -- is depicted as human. "Even though he came from the planet Krypton, Superman's creators choose to make him look like an Earthling. Perhaps they felt that readers -- especially younger ones -- would have been uncomfortable with an alien-looking hero."

Zen, on the other hand, is blue-skinned, and his only facial feature is a set of large, dark eyes. "We need to become accustomed to 'lifeforms' that look different from us," Stern said, "and to accept the idea that they can be just as good and heroic as we are."

"E.T. the Extraterrestrial was a case in point, and indicates that we are willing to take aliens literally to heart -- but there hasn't been a similar alien icon for decades. I hope that Zen can help fill that void."

[W12]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: The Toronto Star

Date: Thursday 5th December 1996

U.S. AIR FORCE MAY BE GOING SCI-FI

Plan has robot attack planes, killer laser beams

BY RICHARD SISK SPECIAL TO THE STAR

WASHINGTON-The U.S. Air Force could morph into the Space and Air Force under a strategic plan to win the next centuries wars. The sci-fi-like Space and Air Force would feature robot attack planes, killer laser beams and sophisticated weapons systems expected to be able to hit any target anywhere on Earth. It also could win the perennial fight with the other armed services for shrinking defence dollars.

The flight service is on a path of change "from an air force in to an air and space force on an evolutionary path to a space and air force," Air Force Secretary Sheila Widnall said.

Widnall's comments came as she outlined the plan called "Global Engagement: A Vision for the 21st Century Air Force."

Global Engagement foresees new generations of robot-operated unmanned air vehicles for surveillance and pinpoint strikes at enemy forces, together with orbiting spy satellites for weapons guidance and communication, and airborne lasers to zap incoming ballistic missiles. The new technology would "offer an alternative to the kind of military operation that pits large numbers of young Americans against an adversary in brute, force-on-force conflicts," the air force plan said.

Defence analysts viewed that statement as a warm-up shot at the army, navy and marines in preparation for next year's battle for long-range budgets in the Quadrennial Defence Review by U.S. Congress.

"All the services are positioning themselves to try to walk away from that review with me biggest share of the money," said industry consultant Loren Thompson.

The other services will weigh in shortly with their own plans, as "everybody scrambles to in sure that they come up with a mission justification for their weapons," said retired army Col. Dan Smith at the Centre for Defence Information.

"The service rivalries are more intense now because, supposedly, me defence budgets are going to be cut," Smith said. The current budget range is \$250 billion to \$270 billion (U.S.), he said.

Widnall called the dominance of space envisioned under Global Engagement as revolutionary for warfare "as the invention of gunpowder or the Manhattan Project," which produced the first atomic bomb.

The goal is "to build the ability to detect, track and eventually target anything on the surface of the Earth," she said.

The air force has given a \$1.1 billion contract to a joint venture of Lockheed Martin, Boeing and the TRW Corp. to develop an attack laser aircraft

The plane would be a modified Boeing 747 with a particle laser gun mounted in the nose to destroy enemy ballistic missiles with high-energy beams of light at ranges up to 480 kilo metres.

If the project is successful, the air force would buy seven more of the laser aircraft after the year 2003 at a cost of another \$6 billion.

But Thompson pointed to the enormous technical problems that must be overcome in building a laser more powerful than any now in existence.

[W13]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: Adelaide Advertiser  
Date: 5th December 1996

SCIENCE MINISTER OPENS THE FAMILY X-FILES

The Federal Science Minister, Mr McGauran, has revealed his mother

believed she once stumbled across evidence of a UFO landing.

Mr McGauran's decision to throw open the family X-Files yesterday followed an admission that some of the 30 UFO reports received annually by the CSIRO could not be explained.

"When she (Mary McGauran) was a young lass she walked out of the door of her farm in the La Trobe Valley and swears there were patterns in the grass which could not have been caused by humans or animals" she told Melbourne radio station 3AW.

On Tuesday, in a written response to calls to open the files on UFO sightings, he said some could not be explained.

"Many reports lack sufficient detail on which to base a scientific investigation," he said.

A spokeswoman for Mr McGauran said the minister believed 98 per cent of sightings could be explained. "But there are an odd 1 or 2 per cent that really stump the experts", she said.

[W14]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: NASA

Date: 6th December 1996

#### SPACE RADAR UNEARTH'S SECRETS OF THE ANCIENT NILE

One of the many great mysteries of the Nile river may be solved with the discovery of an ancient river channel buried under layers of sand in the Sahara Desert in Africa.

The buried river channel was revealed in images taken by the Spaceborne Imaging Radar C/X-Band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SIR-C/X-SAR) that flew twice on the Space Shuttle Endeavour in 1994. The radar images were processed at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), Pasadena, CA, and the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD).

"One of the things this discovery helps us examine is the origin of what's called the Great Bend of the Nile," said Dr. Bob Stern, a SIR-C science team member at UTD. "The Nile generally flows due north, but in the Sudan, it makes a huge, looping bend that is really remarkable because the river is flowing through the Sahara Desert, the largest, driest desert on the face of the Earth. There must be a very good reason for the river to make this great bend, otherwise we would expect it to flow straight to the Mediterranean Sea." Instead, it bends southwestwards and wanders through the Sahara for another 200 miles before resuming its northward course.

"The discovery of the river channel shows us that probably sometime between 10,000 and 1,000,000 years ago, the Nile was forced to abandon its bed and take up a new course to the south. This buried channel proves that this region has been tectonically active and shows us how this activity has forced the river to change its course," Stern said. "Understanding what controls the course of the Nile is a critical part of understanding Nile history and predicting Nile behavior, which is important because the river is essential to millions of people in Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia."

A scientific paper on the discovery written by Stern and co-authored with UTD geologist Dr. Mohamed Gamal Abdelsalam appears in the Dec. 6 issue of Science magazine. The discovery grew out of research that the scientists have been doing on plate tectonics and the formation of a "supercontinent" more than 600 million years ago.

"Our original experiment involved studying ancient structures in Precambrian rocks that formed where two supercontinents collided hundreds of millions of years ago. In the course of our study, we became interested in how these structures influenced the course of the Nile," explained Stern.

It was the tantalizing radar images of the area hidden beneath the sands of the Sahara that turned the scientists' work in a new direction.

"This discovery wouldn't have happened without SIR-C/X-SAR imagery. Our work in northeast Africa would have been limited to what we could see on the ground or could be seen in satellite photographs. The radar is much more efficient in getting information from these sand covered areas because the radar waves are able to penetrate the sand. SIR-C/X-SAR imagery has revealed a huge piece of the Earth's surface

-- an area that's never been seriously explored before," Stern noted.

"This is one of the most exciting discoveries from the SIR-C/X-SAR mission to date. I expect we'll continue to be surprised by fascinating results like these as the science team continues to analyze the radar data," said Dr. Diane Evans, the SIR-C project scientist at JPL. "More and more we are finding the radar data have applications to answer questions about the Earth that were not originally anticipated."

SIR-C/X-SAR is a joint mission of the United States, German and Italian space agencies. JPL built and manages the SIR-C portion of the mission for NASA's Office of Mission to Planet Earth, a program to study the Earth's land, oceans, atmosphere and life as a total, integrated system.

[W15]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: USA Today  
Date: 12th July 1996

New theory revises stars' ages

NEW YORK - The universe's most ancient stars could be lying about their ages.

A new theory proposes that globular clusters - dense balls of stars thought to be the oldest in the universe - might be up to 3 billion years younger than they're now thought to be.

If it is proved correct, the theory could help scientists solve one of astronomy's oddest conundrums: the universe appears younger than its oldest stars.

One way out of that mess would be to demonstrate that the stars aren't really so old after all.

NASA astrophysicist Allen Sweigart may have done that with a theory that stars in the clusters make themselves look older by dredging helium gas up from their superhot interiors.

"It may have an important effect," said Robert Kraft, an astronomer at the University of California, Santa Cruz. "This is one more factor that's got to go into the discussion of the ages of globular clusters."

Pulling the stars down by 3 billion years won't completely solve the apparent generation gap. Current estimates put the most ancient stars at about 14 billion years old and the universe's age at 9 billion years.

But that's not the whole picture, said University of Chicago astronomer David Schramm. Scientists are still so uncertain about both age estimates that the 5-billion-year discrepancy between them could eventually be explained by any number of things. Sweigart's proposal is only one of them.

Even Sweigart said he doesn't want to push the age issue too hard. It's just one possible implication of the helium-mixing process he describes.

"I don't want to claim that my models have proven or shown that the globular clusters are younger," Sweigart said. "It is still a hypothesis that needs to be much more carefully examined and tested against the observations."

Sweigart's theory, to be summarized in the Jan. 1 issue of *Astrophysical Journal Letters*, shows how some stars in the globular clusters could be mixing themselves up, moving large amounts of superhot helium from their cores to their outer shells. Through a complex series of steps, that could make the oldest stars look older than they really are.

Most experts consider Sweigart's theory an excellent explanation of some unusual aspects of how stars work. But they're less enthusiastic about his suggestion that it could also make the globular clusters appear younger.

"It will have a huge impact in certain circles. I think in the age of the universe it won't," said Michael Bolte, an astronomy

professor at UC-Santa Cruz.

[W16]\*\*\*\*\*

Source: Sunday Herald Sun (Melbourne Australia)  
Date: 8th December 1996

#### CRATER OF WATER BRINGS CHEER

Author/Reporter: Graeme O'Neil

DOES a cache of cold gold, hidden in the base of an ancient impact crater, await the next human visitors to the Moon?

US space scientists are excited by this week's discovery, of signs of a large water ice deposit in a crater at the Moon's South Pole.

If the Clementine spacecraft has discovered water, it would literally be worth its weight in gold for US plans to establish a permanent base on the Moon.

The image on this page shows the crater, as revealed by the joint NASA-US military lunar-orbiting probe's radar imaging device, which can "see" through the darkness to produce detailed images of the lunar terrain - and even reveal something of its composition.

As it orbited the Moon for two months, the spacecraft obtained 1.8 million images of the lunar surface that will be vital to selecting landing sites for future manned missions to the Moon - as well as the site for a lunar base.

If it can be confirmed, the discovery of a large reserve of water ice in the crater, possibly the legacy of a comet impact hundreds of millions of years ago, would carve millions off the cost of establishing a lunar base.

Emeritus Professor Ron Brown of Monash University, says that if there is water on the Moon it exists against the odds.

Prof. Brown says that on the sunward face of the Moon intense solar radiation and near vacuum would turn ice directly into water vapor. Intense ultra-violet radiation would cause the vapor to dissociate into its constituent hydrogen and oxygen atoms, which would then drift off into space because of the Moon's low gravity.

The only place water ice could exist on the Moon was in permanent darkness and at extremely low temperatures - conditions that would exist in the polar crater observed by the Clementine spacecraft.

The presence of water on the Moon would reduce the huge cost of ferrying drinking water into space for a lunar colony, Prof Brown said.

"Water is a very bulky and costly commodity if you have to lug it into space," he said.

"The primary virtue of discovering water on the Moon's surface is that, apart from providing drinking water for a lunar colony, it could also be electrolysed to produce oxygen and hydrogen.

"The colony needs oxygen to breathe, but the hydrogen is really only a by-product."

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