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Oberg/Cooper rebuttal.4

From: "Jerry Cohen" <rjcohen@li.net>
Date: Thu, 6 Feb 1997 07:13:18 -0500
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Subject: Oberg/Cooper rebuttal.4

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Oberg/Cooper rebuttal.4
continued from 3

A researcher's response to James Oberg's:
"IN SEARCH OF GORDON COOPER'S UFOs"
by Jerry Cohen
=====

As we ended "Oberg/Cooper rebuttal 3," the question was, "Exactly what was it that caused Dr. Hynek to change his stance from skeptic to believer over the years?"

As I mentioned in "Oberg/Cooper rebuttal 1," in order to find where UFO evidence might possibly be hiding, one must have at least a basic knowledge of UFO history. Upon reading many posts in "alt.paranet.ufo," it became obvious to me that many people had forgotten, or been too young to even know, this vital sequence of events. The following is an effort to refresh people's memories along that historic trail. This very accurate, documented synopsis of a phenomenon and its backwash allows us to more fully understand how we got where we are today. Although many cases have been left out, the ones I've selected were chosen to illustrate what I personally consider to be germane to the issue at hand. At this moment I don't ask you to believe every case presented here but only to be cognizant of this extraordinary progression of events, Dr. Hynek's role in it and the Air Force's reaction. More information on the Colorado Project (Condon Study) can be found in the sources given.

UFOS, A SYNOPSIS OF AN EXTREMELY RELEVANT HISTORY

Modern Ufology's roots: (Never to be forgotten)

[The accuracy of the following can be checked by consulting the sources provided via your local libraries]

also
it is my understanding

The Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS)
is the repository for NICAP files

* * *

Those of us who followed the UFO phenomenon from 1947 on, for various reasons ranging from basic curiosity to some of which skeptics will find impossible to believe, discovered a range of UFO claims which displayed themselves before our incredulous eyes..

Beginning with Kenneth Arnold's sighting in 1947, through a host of others, pausing in 1952 for the Washington D.C. RADAR/visuals, 1 and moving ahead to a sighting wave in 1957 which included some claimed "glowing egg-shaped" UFO fly-overs which happened to include the following:

"Coast Guard Cutter Sebago RADAR/visual case" (11/7/57) which appeared in Long Island newspapers and became personal to me because a neighbor of mine was dating one of the crew members when it happened. Crewmen on the Coast Guard cutter Sebago, off the coast of Louisiana, reported visually seeing an object resembling "a brilliant planet with a high rate of speed". It was tracked on the vessel's radar screen for twenty seven minutes and flitted on and off the screen several times during that time period. (Complete text of which I'll post a bit later.); 2

"James Stokes case" (11/6/57, the day before the Sebago case) in which "an engineer from the Air Force Missile Development Center at Holloman AFB, Alamogordo, New Mexico" and people in ten other cars claimed their radios died and cars were stalled when a UFO flew across the highway in front of them 3 and; the

"Kirtland AFB case" (11/4/57, two days before the Stokes case): Condon Study case #141, cited at the AAAS UFO Symposium, Boston, Dec 27, 1969 by Dr. James McDonald as a case he personally felt was "inadequately investigated and reported." 4 The *Sebago* and *Stokes* cases hadn't happened yet and, all three cases occurred in a very close proximity of time. (These are the three cases from 1957 mentioned in "Oberg/Cooper 1." I'll examine these in greater detail in a later essay), and the

"SKY THING" (occurred 8/30/60, two years & nine months later), of which Dr. Hynek was probably aware, and which I posted, but no one, as of yet, seems to have come up with a probable solution to same. 5 If you remember, it concerned an object appearing on an irregular schedule, going against the earth's rotation, twice as fast as the Echo I satellite and was photographed by at least three tracking stations. As I mentioned earlier, Dr. Hynek probably didn't have an explanation either. It was "strikingly odd."

(If you also remember from "Oberg/Cooper rebuttal 3," Dr. Hynek was in charge of the SAO *Smithsonian Astronomical Observatory* project to track the first satellites both we and the Russians were shooting into space.)

The "1960 Sky Thing" and an increasing number of "claimed occurrences" caused some people to start becoming really curious and to begin reading UFO reports just a little more closely. However, as mentioned previously, total skeptics of the phenomenon who refused even to consider the possibility of "outside visitors" had one piece of "solid bedrock" upon which to stand. With statistics provided by the Air Force, they could believe the Air Force's reoccurring theme that:

** Most cases have been explained
and there is nothing to UFOs. 6 **

(Most of us didn't know it back then but we certainly found out later that in the background, the Air Force had a civilian astronomical consultant. He had worked for them since 1947 or 48 analyzing UFO cases with the objective of confirming that specific statement. [Dr. J. Allen Hynek] Even being ignorant of this, one could assume they [the Air Force] probably had analyzed this UFO thing thoroughly and scientifically to make their determinations. As I said, it certainly eased many a questioning mind.)

One of the first clues we had that something was amiss, however, happened the beginning of August 1965. We had another wave of claimed sightings that year in Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Kansas in which police officers reported them; the weather bureau in Wichita tracked an object; and Bob Campbell, television

newsman in Sherman Texas, near Oklahoma, took a picture of a strange object. The Air Force explained them all away as "either twinkles from the planet Jupiter or stars Rigel, Capella, Betelgeuse or Aldeberan." 7

But hold on folks....Robert Risser, the director of Oklahoma City's Kirkpatrick Planetarium disagreed with the Air Force's explanation. He said "Somebody has made a mistake. Many of those objects mentioned by the Air Force are not visible until just before dawn in Oklahoma City and others aren't visible at all." 8 Those "thinking and questioning individuals" amongst us thought to themselves, "What the heck is going on here? Who gave that dumb explanation?" (We also find out later, it wasn't Dr. Hynek. He mentions this and a great deal more in his 1972 book "The UFO Experience"; but I'm getting ahead of myself. I'll address this in another installment.)

Six months later (2/66), an article appeared in Look Magazine by author John Fuller. It concerned UFO incidents that allegedly took place one month after the Texas, New Mexico sightings, beginning approximately Sept. 3, 1965 at Exeter, N.H. 9 The Exeter sightings continued over a period of several weeks and were claimed to have been witnessed by approximately *sixty* people including police personnel. The encounters were *extremely close* and the "craft" descriptions were *amazingly detailed,* including those of the police. Simply for the record, just "two months after" the claimed Exeter incidents, in early November 1965, the lights went out along the Northeast coast. We were in the midst of the first great Northeast Power Failure. It certainly was an "odd coincidence." A virtual "wave" of claimed sightings, more of them extremely detailed, appeared in magazines and newspapers and continued into 1967. 10

Getting back to 1966, however, the public's eye finally began to focus upon Dr. J. Allen Hynek, the Northwestern University professor and consulting scientist the Air Force had hired to debunk UFO sightings for "Project Blue Book," their official study on UFOs. A rash of claimed UFO sightings had occurred near Dexter/Hillsdale, Michigan (3/66) and Dr. Hynek flew there to examine the situation. Being pressed early on by reporters as to what he thought the sightings might be, he guessed that some might possibly have been *swamp gas*. 11

Considering the number of excellently described and detailed sightings that had occurred to that point, and the lack of confidence inspired by at least one inept Air Force official explanation, the news media jumped all over his guess and lambasted him for it. People had simply had enough! They wanted immediate answers. Although "Dexter/Hillsdale" was far from a strong case, Hynek's bizarre circumstance with the press, when combined with the flurry of claimed sightings leading up to that time, eventually led to Congressional hearings on Capitol Hill. 12 Those hearings ultimately led to, as we mentioned earlier, an *Air Force sponsored* "University study concerning UFOs"; the only of its type ever contracted publicly. It was known alternately as the "Condon Study" or "Colorado Project." 13 Well, NOW we were finally going to get to the bottom of this. University scientists were finally going to seriously study this whole thing. (So we all thought at the time!)

In the meantime, some of us happened to notice a startling article by Dr. Hynek in Newsweek Magazine (10/10/66) followed by another multi-page article in the Saturday Evening Post (12/17/66). 14 In those articles, Dr. Hynek stated he didn't think it was *all* "hogwash" and gave quite a few calm, intelligent reasons. In them he said: He "doesn't believe it's a secret military device"; "Responsible people report these sightings"; and refuting Philip Klass, emerging skeptic, "Relatively few UFO sightings can be explained by ball lightning. ... Many have been seen when atmospheric conditions are not right for ball lightning." In the Saturday Evening Post article he said "...other scientists laughed at the whole thing while some were curious and were afraid to speak out."; He said that occasionally, the Air Force would disregard his evaluations" and did not always consult him on every case. Also, back then, he didn't believe the Air Force was purposely hiding information on UFOs. He felt they just didn't believe UFOs could exist. (At least, that's what he originally thought. As posted in "Oberg/Cooper rebuttal 1," his quoted comments from "The UFO Cover-up" had demonstrated he finally arrived at a different conclusion concerning this.) 15

Wow! The Air Force's own scientific consultant was saying this! What a dangerous political thing for him to say. Something like this could cost a person his reputation, his job and perhaps even his career. I thought to myself "He's got to really believe in what he is saying. What does he know that we don't?"

What I and most others didn't fully realize at the time was that the combination of events of 1965/66; the cases he was familiar with in "Project Blue Book," and his awareness of the lack of actual study given to good cases by that project, had become as compelling to Dr. Hynek as they were to anyone else who had really tuned in via the newspapers. 16 What we were eventually to find out was that things concerning the Air Force were not as we had thought. Also, this crazy UFO topic had a way of striking fear into the hearts of both scientists involved directly in "the politics of science," who were embarrassed to take it seriously in front of their colleagues, and the average citizen who had his own UFO experience but was but was embarrassed to report it, due to the ridicule filtering down from above.

It was, in part, this "fear of ridicule" that was keeping large numbers of people from studying the topic seriously and, I might add, still does today. The rhetoric went something like this: "Where other life probably exists is too far for us to travel ... we haven't found any (life) yet ... and since we haven't found them and we can't fly there, obviously, they haven't found us and they can't fly here. You folks who are seeing this stuff must be hallucinating."

Focusing, once again, on the Colorado project: As students of ufology are well aware, the University of Colorado finally passed its judgment and two major conclusions by Dr. Condon became legendary.

The first:

"our general conclusion is that nothing has come from the studies of UFOs in the past twenty one years that has added to scientific knowledge." 17

(Dr. Condon was partially correct here. Mainstream science obviously had done little to add to it. As I mentioned in "Oberg/Cooper rebuttal.3" (see footnotes 9-13 therein for further info.), his own study was plagued by that same "fear of ridicule." It was certainly a "fear-related" memo that had been written by Robert Low, one of the heads of the project, in an attempt to protect the university from ridicule. But an observer is certainly entitled to ask: "What could possibly be learned about *any* subject in an atmosphere such as this, where politics totally controlled and overrode science?")

and a second statement:

"further extensive study of UFOs probably cannot be justified in the expectation that science will be advanced thereby." 18

Quite a conclusion. However, the UFO phenomenon, in this instance, had the last laugh. I had already mentioned the result of the leaked memo and that other scientists examined the study and eventually brought to light the incredible fact that its conclusions were not supported by its data. 19 Here is a brief synopsis of some fascinating and extremely relevant events occurring *after* these pronouncements were made.

The following appeared in the NICAP Investigator: January 1969, p. 7 .. "A special UFO Committee of the American Institute of Astronautics and Aeronautics (AIAA), the largest non-governmental aerospace agency in the world ... was established." A ten man committee was formed to study the UFO topic further and "plans to develop certain recommendations and to give some insight into its reasoning." They concluded that ... "it (the UFO controversy) deserves the attention of the engineering and scientific community." "A 'Joint Statement by Scientists,' released by NICAP, brought strong support from scientists in various fields, including aerospace, psychology, physics, chemistry, botany, sociology and biology. about fifty scientists signed a statement urging 'an appropriate committee of the Congress to initiate an investigation of. . . UFOs.'"

A quote from Dr. Hynek appeared in the 5/69 NICAP Investigator,

p.8: "Dr. Hynek writing in the April, 1969 issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, likens the Condon Report to an 'uninspired pot-boiler' and calls it a 'strange sort of scientific paper (that) does not fulfill the promise of its title' (i.e. of its claim of being scientific). 'The book,' says Hynek, 'leaves the same strange, inexplicable residue of unknowns which has plagued the U.S. Air Force investigation for twenty years. In fact, the percentage of *unknowns* in the Condon report appears to be even higher than in the Air Force investigation..' "

As previously mentioned, Dr. James McDonald brought his findings before several scientific groups. Three of these included: Dupont Chapter of the Scientific Research Society of America, Wilmington, Del., on February 12, 1969 ; National Amateur Astronomers, Inc. (NAA), Aug. 22, 1969 and to an American Association For The Advancement Of Science (AAAS) meeting, Dec. 27, 1969 . (J.C. I'll be presenting an enlightening portion of McDonald's testimony a little later on.) 22

Another quote from the NICAP Investigator, November, 1970: "The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) has recommended renewed scientific investigation of UFOs." It reported on a three year study by an eleven man panel of its own. It said "The AIAA scientists rejected the Condon Report as the last word on UFOs, saying they could find no 'basis in the report for Dr. Condon's prediction that nothing of scientific value will come of further studies.' " "In fact," the group stated, "(we) find that the opposite conclusion could have been drawn from the content of the report -- namely, that a phenomenon with such a high ratio of unexplained cases (about 30 per cent) should arouse sufficient scientific curiosity to continue its study." (J.C. this percentage was higher than I originally quoted previously. I'm not sure which was correct. Not withstanding, even the lower percentage was higher than the Air Force claimed.)

So, when one examines the record, it clearly shows it wasn't just Hynek and McDonald who disagreed with the Condon Study conclusions. Unfortunately for science, all these admonitions came too late and the Air Force, who paid for the study, got what it paid for; the perfect reason to dismantle Project Blue Book... a project that, as we will eventually discover, had become an embarrassment to itself.

++ Those reading this that think I am slandering the Air Force and Project Blue Book can rest assured that *history* substantiates everything I have said. I will completely detail, and confirm all of it in upcoming installments. ++

In December 1969, an announcement was made by then Air Force Secretary, Dr. Robert C. Seamans Jr., who informed us that the continuation of the (Blue Book) study "no longer can be justified either on the ground of national security or in the interest of science." The Air Force, then, shipped all its "Project Blue Book" files to Maxwell AFB in Alabama. 20

It was painfully obvious that although the UFO topic had cried out to be scientifically analyzed, it didn't get its fair hearing. To this day, it *has not yet* been fairly studied (at least by civilian science).

Naturally there was a backwash to all this. Within that backwash was a book from Dr. Hynek that revealed to us some of the inner workings of Project Bluebook and proved, beyond a shadow of doubt, there was definitely more going on here than first met the eye. Furthermore, with the passage of time, things surfaced that made it crystal clear that our Air Force and government had a lot more information concerning UFOs than they were willing to tell. 21 My next essay will focus on more of this "backwash;" specifically, extraordinary revelations by Dr. Hynek concerning Project Blue Book and how these relate to Gordon Cooper's claims.

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End: Oberg/Cooper rebuttal.4

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