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11:11 PM on July 21 - Athenaem - Athens Daily News - Georgia.

Air Force explanation falls flat to UFO buffs
By Robert Burns
Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The Air Force is sticking to its story. Those weren't alien bodies secretly recovered from a UFO crash site in New Mexico half a century ago. They were dummies.

"Case closed," the Air Force insists in a 231-page report released Tuesday on the so-called Roswell "incident."

Not so fast, say believers.

"If you've seen an alien, you would know the difference between that and a stupid crash dummy," said Barb Sauerman, the switchboard operator at the Roswell mayor's office.

And Deon Crosby, director of the International UFO Museum and Research Center in Roswell, said the report raised more questions than it answered - and certainly was not sufficient to let the Air Force wash its hands of the controversy.

"It's not going to do that at all," she said.

The most likely explanation for the unverified alien reports made in July 1947, the Air Force said, relates to life-size dummies dropped from the skies during a series of experiments in the 1950s. What is not fully explained, however, is how people could have confused events that happened a decade apart. "If you find that people talk about things over a period of time, they begin to lose exactly when the date was," said Col. John Haynes, an Air Force declassification officer who presented the report at a Pentagon news conference.

"I have no other explanation."

To illustrate the room for confusion, Haynes showed file footage from the 1950s of dummies dressed in Air Force flight suits pulled aloft by enormous high-altitude balloons, then dropped to earth. The object was to devise a way pilots or astronauts could reach

earth if forced to escape at extremely high altitudes.

The black-and-white footage is a one-of-a-kind collection of Air Force film and photos, including a shot of a fully outfitted dummy called "Sierra Sam" standing upright with his arms outstretched over the shoulders of two officers. The majority of the dummies - which had skeletons of aluminum or steel, skin of latex or plastic, cast aluminum skulls and instrument cavities in their torsos and heads - landed outside military bases in eastern New Mexico, near Roswell, the Air Force report said.

But skeptics are still skeptical.

"I think this (explanation) is a real stretch," said Karl Pflock, a UFO researcher in New Mexico. But Pflock says he doesn't think the Roswell incident involved alien spacecraft.

Thus the most lasting of UFO lore is likely to live on.

"They've got egg on their face and they've not done anything to remove it," said Walter Haut, who was the public information officer at Roswell Army Air Field in 1947.

In this 50th anniversary year of the Roswell incident, the Air Force says the spaceship legend grew from a combination of honest misunderstandings by people unfamiliar with Air Force operations in New Mexico and deliberate distortions of actual events by publicity seekers.

"Some persons may legitimately ask why the Air Force expended time and effort to respond to mythical, if not comedic, allegations," the Air Force report said. The essential reason for responding, it said, was to set the record straight.

The Air Force answered the first key question in 1994: Was the debris recovered near Roswell from a flying saucer? The answer was no, the alleged spacecraft was actually foil-coated fabric and other parts of a crashed Air Force balloon that was pulling a "train" of radar reflectors and other devices, the service said.

But the second question had never been addressed in detail: Were alien bodies removed from the site, carted off to a military hospital and the whole thing hushed up?

The report says there simply is nothing in its records from the 1940s - classified or unclassified - that raises even the remotest possibility of a recovery of extraterrestrial beings or anything else resembling life forms in the Roswell area. The only possible explanation, it says, is the test dummies.

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