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Washington Post Paranoia Poll (UFOs Etc.)

From: Stig_Agermose@online.pol.dk (Stig Agermose)
Date: Wed, 30 Jul 1997 08:10:21 +0200
Fwd Date: Wed, 30 Jul 1997 09:23:50 -0400
Subject: Washington Post Paranoia Poll (UFOs Etc.)

UNCONVENTIONAL WISDOM

New facts and hot stats from the social sciences

By Richard Morin

Sunday, July 27, 1997; Page C05

The Washington Post=20

My Editor Is a Space Alien and Other Paranoid Thoughts

It's those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer. And this hot season, the emphasis is definitely on crazy.

Many of us have been staring wide-eyed for weeks at those Pathfinder photographs from the surface of Mars. But a new Washington Post survey suggests that one out of six American adults -- an estimated 27 million people -- suspect those photos may be fakes and doubt that the spacecraft really landed on the Red Planet. Half of these doubters go even further. They say they're convinced that the whole Mars mission was an elaborate fraud. Oh, my.

And talk about out-of-town summer guests. Half of those surveyed accept the possibility that intelligent aliens from outer space have visited Earth -- and one in four say aliens might be living among us now. Three percent told Post poll takers they think they may have actually met an alien.

Well, of course you have. But whatever; Americans might be forgiven even this deep-space flight of fancy. After all, we've already been inundated this summer with the hoopla and hokum surrounding the 50th anniversary of the purported Roswell UFO landing, as well as the release of mega-hyped movies with extra-terrestrial themes such as "Men in Black" and "Contact."=20

While all this spacey talk may just be silly summer fun, other recent polls offer a more sinister and sobering look at some of our most persistent national fears.

Half of those interviewed in a survey by Scripps Howard newspapers said it was at least "somewhat likely" that federal officials were "directly responsible for the assassination of President Kennedy." Four in 10 also suspect that the U.S. Navy shot down TWA Flight 800 off the coast

of Long Island last year.

Likewise, unpublished data collected in a recent survey conducted in the 13 Southern states by the Institute for Research in the Social Sciences at the University of North Carolina found that one out of five blacks believe that it was "absolutely" or "probably" true that AIDS and HIV "are being used as a plot to deliberately kill African Americans."

Why are so many of us so suspicious? Well, sometimes the government is out to get you. After all, President Clinton did just apologize for the Tuskegee syphilis experiment. And remember how unsuspecting servicemen were used as guinea pigs in early atomic bomb tests to assess the effects of radiation?

Experts also say the news and entertainment media fan our paranoia. Seven of Hollywood's top-ten grossing films last year included decidedly anti-government themes. On TV, the hit show "The X-Files" dishes up both government conspiracies and space aliens.=20

ARE SPACE ALIENS FLYING THOSE BLACK HELICOPTERS?

Percentage of Americans who believe there's "at least a chance" that:

- Intelligent aliens from outer space "have visited the Earth sometime=20 in the past."=20 50%
- Aliens from outer space are "living here on Earth right now." 25%
- The Pathfinder never landed on Mars and the "photos are fakes." 17%

Percentage who say it is either "very" or "somewhat" likely that:

- President Franklin Roosevelt failed to warn U.S. Forces that the=20 Japanese were going attack Pearl Harbor because he wanted America to get into a war with Japan. 42%
- The FBI "deliberately set" the fires that destroyed the Branch Davidian compound in Waco. 40%
- The U.S. Navy shot down TWA Flight 800 "either by accident or on=20 purpose." 39%

Percentage of African Americans living in the South who say it's "absolutely" or "probably" true that:

- The government "deliberately makes sure that drugs are easily available=20 in poor black neighborhoods in order=20 to harm black people." 46%
- HIV and AIDS are being used "as a plot to deliberately kill African=20 Americans." 20%

SOURCES: Surveys sponsored by The Washington Post, Scripps Howard Newspapers, University of North Carolina Center for the Study of the American South

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