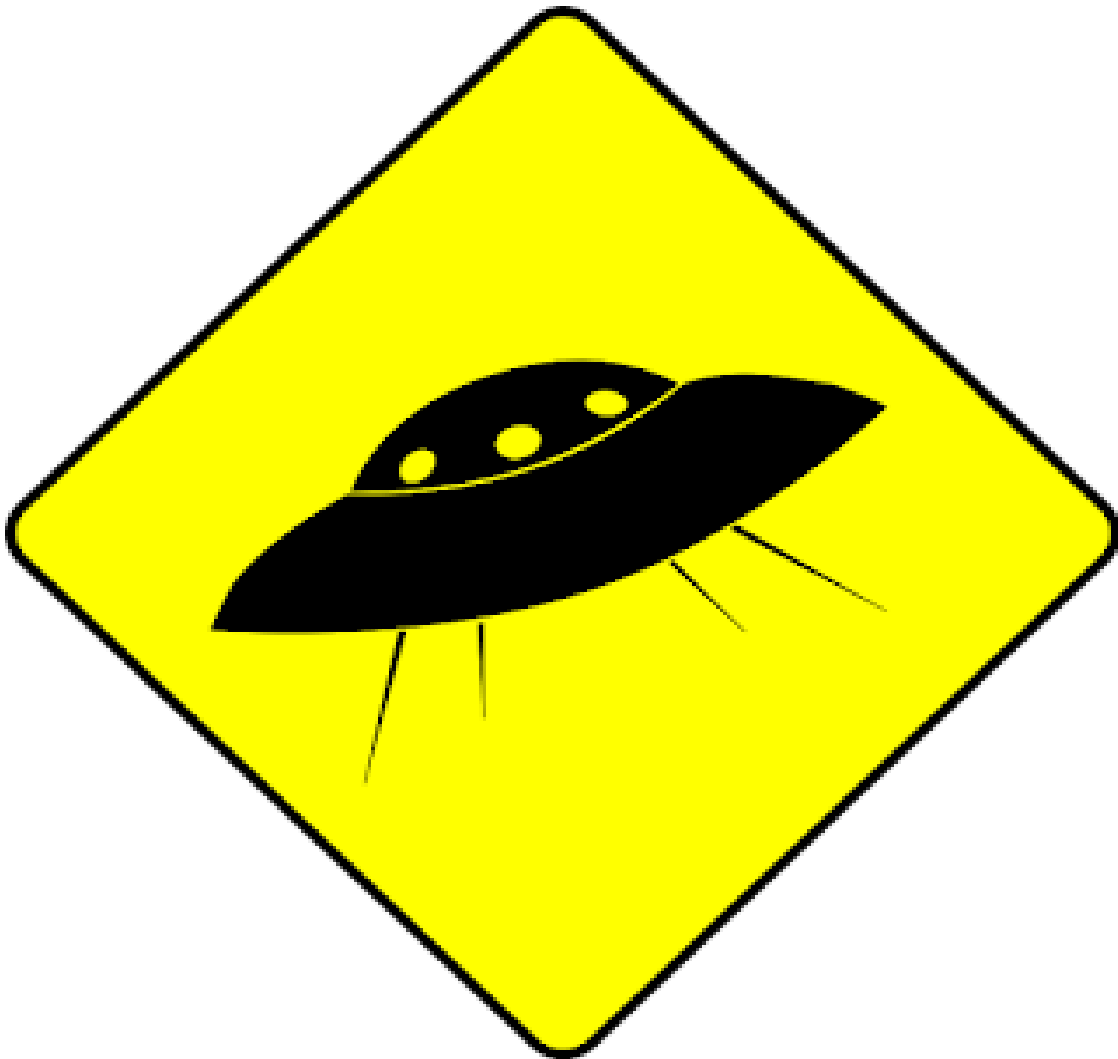


Multiple Authors

UFO

Anthology of texts about unidentified flying objects



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Unidentified flying object

An **unidentified flying object** or "**UFO**" is an object observed in the sky that is not readily identified. Most UFOs are later identified as conventional objects or phenomena. The term is widely used for claimed observations of extraterrestrial craft.

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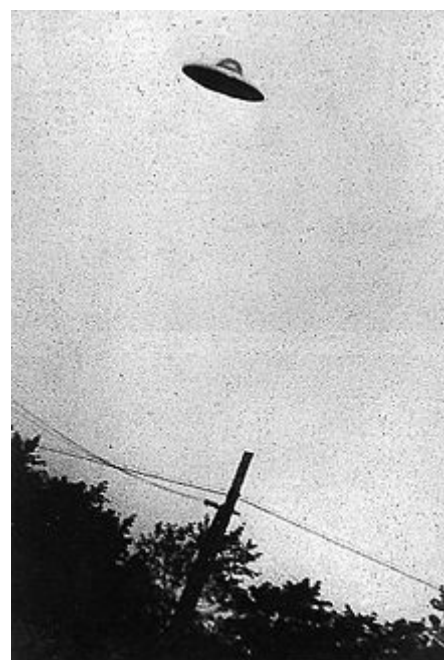
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Photograph of an alleged UFO in Passaic, New Jersey, taken on July 31, 1952.



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Terminology

The term "UFO" (or "UFOB") was coined in 1953 by the United States Air Force (USAF) to serve as a catch-all for all such reports. In its initial definition, the USAF stated that a "UFOB" was "any airborne object which by performance, aerodynamic characteristics, or unusual features, does not conform to any presently known aircraft or missile type, or which cannot be positively identified as a familiar object." Accordingly, the term was initially restricted to that fraction of cases which remained unidentified after investigation, as the USAF was interested in potential national security reasons and/or "technical aspects" (see Air Force Regulation 200-2).

During the late 1940s and through the 1950s, UFOs were often referred to popularly as "flying saucers" or "flying discs". The term UFO became more widespread during the 1950s, at first in technical literature, but later in popular use. UFOs garnered considerable interest during the Cold War, an era associated with a heightened concern for national security, and, more recently, in the 2010s, for unexplained reasons.^{[1][2]} Nevertheless, various studies have concluded that the phenomenon does not represent a threat to national security, nor does it contain anything worthy of scientific pursuit (e.g., 1951 Flying Saucer Working Party, 1953 CIA Robertson Panel, USAF Project Blue Book, Condon Committee).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a UFO as "An unidentified flying object; a 'flying saucer'." The first published book to use the word was authored by Donald E. Keyhoe.^[3]

The acronym "UFO" was coined by Captain Edward J. Ruppelt, who headed Project Blue Book, then the USAF's official investigation of UFOs. He wrote, "Obviously the term 'flying saucer' is misleading when applied to objects of every conceivable shape and performance. For this reason the military prefers the more general, if less colorful, name: unidentified flying objects. UFO (pronounced Yoo-foe) for short."^[4] Other phrases that were used officially and that predate the UFO acronym include "flying flapjack", "flying disc", "unexplained flying discs", and "unidentifiable object".^{[5][6][7]}

The phrase "flying saucer" had gained widespread attention after the summer of 1947. On June 24, a civilian pilot named Kenneth Arnold reported seeing nine objects flying in formation near Mount Rainier. Arnold timed the sighting and estimated the speed of discs to be over 1,200 mph (1,931 km/h). At the time, he claimed he described the objects flying in a saucer-like fashion, leading to newspaper accounts of "flying saucers" and "flying discs".^{[8][9]}

In popular usage, the term UFO came to be used to refer to claims of alien spacecraft.^[3] and because of the public and media ridicule associated with the topic, some ufologists and investigators prefer to use terms such as "unidentified aerial phenomenon" (UAP) or "anomalous phenomena", as in the title of the National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena (NARCAP).^[10] "Anomalous aerial vehicle" (AAV) or "unidentified aerial system" (UAS) are also sometimes used in a military aviation context to describe unidentified targets.^[11]

Studies

Studies have established that the majority of UFO observations are misidentified conventional objects or natural phenomena—most commonly aircraft, balloons, noctilucent clouds, nacreous clouds, or astronomical objects such as meteors or bright planets with a small percentage even being hoaxes.^[note 1] Between 5% and 20% of reported sightings are not explained, and therefore can be classified as unidentified in the strictest sense. While proponents of the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH) suggest that these unexplained reports are of alien spacecraft, the null hypothesis cannot be excluded that these reports are simply other more prosaic phenomena that cannot be identified due to lack of complete information or due to the necessary subjectivity of the reports.

Almost no scientific papers about UFOs have been published in peer-reviewed journals.^[12] There was, in the past, some debate in the scientific community about whether any scientific investigation into UFO sightings is warranted with the general conclusion being that the phenomenon was not worthy of serious investigation except as a cultural artifact.^{[13][14][15][16][17][18][19]} UFOs have been the subject of investigations by various governments who have provided extensive records related to the subject. Many of the most involved government-sponsored investigations ended after agencies concluded that there was no benefit to continued investigation.^{[20][21]}

The void left by the lack of institutional or scientific study has given rise to independent researchers and fringe groups, including the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) in the mid-20th century and, more recently, the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON)^[22] and the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS).^[23] The term "Ufology" is used to describe the collective efforts of those who study reports and associated evidence of unidentified flying objects.^[24]

UFOs have become a prevalent theme in modern culture,^[25] and the social phenomena have been the subject of academic research in sociology and psychology.^[12]

Early history

Unexplained aerial observations have been reported throughout history. Some were undoubtedly astronomical in nature: comets, bright meteors, one or more of the five planets that can be readily seen with the naked eye, planetary conjunctions, or atmospheric optical phenomena such as parhelia and lenticular clouds. An example is Halley's Comet, which was recorded first by Chinese astronomers in 240 BC and possibly as early as 467 BC. Such sightings throughout history often were treated as supernatural portents, angels, or other religious omens. Some current-day UFO researchers have noticed similarities between some religious symbols in medieval paintings and UFO reports^[26] though the canonical and symbolic character of such images is documented by art historians placing more conventional religious interpretations on such images.^[27]

- On April 14, 1561, residents of Nuremberg described the appearance of a large black triangular object. According to witnesses, there were also hundreds of spheres, cylinders and other odd-shaped objects that moved erratically overhead.^[28]
- On January 25, 1878, the *Denison Daily News* printed an article in which John Martin, a local farmer, had reported seeing a large, dark, circular object resembling a balloon flying "at wonderful speed." Martin, according to the newspaper account, said it appeared to be about the size of a saucer, the first known use of the word "saucer" in association with a UFO.^[29]
- In April 1897, thousands of people reported seeing "airships" in various parts of the United States. Many

signed affidavits. Scores of people even reported talking to the pilots. Thomas Edison was asked his opinion, and said, "You can take it from me that it is a pure fake."^{[30][31]}

- On February 28, 1904, there was a sighting by three crew members on the USS Supply 300 miles (483 km) west of San Francisco, reported by Lieutenant Frank Schofield, later to become Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Battle Fleet. Schofield wrote of three bright red egg-shaped and circular objects flying in echelon formation that approached beneath the cloud layer, then changed course and "soared" above the clouds, departing directly away from the earth after two to three minutes. The largest had an apparent size of about six Suns, he said.^{[32][33]}
- The three earliest known pilot UFO sightings, of 1,305 similar sightings catalogued by NARCAP, took place in 1916 and 1926. On January 31, 1916, a UK pilot near Rochford reported a row of lights, resembling lighted windows on a railway carriage, that rose and disappeared. In January 1926 a pilot reported six "flying manhole covers" between Wichita, Kansas, and Colorado Springs, Colorado. In late September 1926 an airmail pilot over Nevada said he had been forced to land by a huge, wingless, cylindrical object.^[34]
- On August 5, 1926, while traveling in the Humboldt Mountains of Tibet's Kokonor region, Russian explorer Nicholas Roerich reported, members of his expedition saw "something big and shiny reflecting the sun, like a huge oval moving at great speed. Crossing our camp the thing changed in its direction from south to southwest. And we saw how it disappeared in the intense blue sky. We even had time to take our field glasses and saw quite distinctly an oval form with shiny surface, one side of which was brilliant from the sun."^[35] Another description by Roerich was of a "shiny body flying from north to south. Field glasses are at hand. It is a huge body. One side glows in the sun. It is oval in shape. Then it somehow turns in another direction and disappears in the southwest."^[36]
- In the Pacific and European theatres during World War II, "foo fighters" (metallic spheres, balls of light and other shapes that followed aircraft) were reported and on occasion photographed by Allied and Axis pilots. Some proposed Allied explanations at the time included St. Elmo's fire, the planet Venus, hallucinations from oxygen deprivation, or German secret weapons.^{[37][38]}
- In 1946, more than 2,000 reports were collected, primarily by the Swedish military, of unidentified aerial objects over the Scandinavian nations, along with isolated reports from France, Portugal, Italy and Greece. The objects were referred to as "Russian hail" and later as "ghost rockets" because it was thought that the mysterious objects were possibly Russian tests of captured German V1 or V2 rockets. Although most were thought to be such natural phenomena as meteors, more than 200 were tracked on radar by the Swedish military and deemed to be "real physical objects." In a 1948 top secret document, Swedish authorities advised the USAF Europe that some of their investigators believed these craft to be extraterrestrial in origin.^[39]

Investigations

UFOs have been subject to investigations over the years that varied widely in scope and scientific rigor. Governments or independent academics in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, Peru, France, Belgium, Sweden, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Mexico, Spain, and the Soviet Union are known to have investigated UFO reports at various times.

Among the best known government studies are the ghost rockets investigation by the Swedish military (1946–1947), Project Blue Book, previously Project Sign and Project Grudge, conducted by the USAF from 1947 until 1969, the secret U.S. Army/Air Force Project Twinkle investigation into green fireballs (1948–1951), the secret USAF Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14^[40] by the Battelle Memorial Institute, and the Brazilian Air Force's 1977 Operação Prato (Operation Saucer). France has had an ongoing investigation (GEPAN/SEPRA/GEIPAN) within its space agency Centre national d'études spatiales (CNES) since 1977; the government of Uruguay has had a similar investigation since 1989.

Project Sign

Project Sign in 1948 produced a highly classified finding (see Estimate of the Situation) that the best UFO reports probably had an extraterrestrial explanation. A top secret Swedish military opinion given to the USAF in 1948 stated that some of their analysts believed that the 1946 ghost rockets and later flying saucers had extraterrestrial origins. (For document, see Ghost rockets.) In 1954 German rocket scientist Hermann Oberth revealed that an

internal West German government investigation, which he headed, had arrived at an extraterrestrial conclusion, but this study was never made public.

Project Grudge

Project Sign was dismantled and became Project Grudge at the end of 1948. Angered by the low quality of investigations by Grudge, the Air Force Director of Intelligence reorganized it as Project Blue Book in late 1951, placing Ruppelt in charge. Blue Book closed down in 1970, using the Condon Committee's negative conclusion as a rationale, thus ending official Air Force UFO investigations. However, a 1969 USAF document, known as the Bolender memo, along with later government documents, revealed that non-public U.S. government UFO investigations continued after 1970. The Bolender memo first stated that "reports of unidentified flying objects that could affect national security ... are not part of the Blue Book system," indicating that more serious UFO incidents already were handled outside the public Blue Book investigation. The memo then added, "reports of UFOs which could affect national security would continue to be handled through the standard Air Force procedures designed for this purpose."^[note 2] In addition, in the late 1960s a chapter on UFOs in the Space Sciences course at the U.S. Air Force Academy gave serious consideration to possible extraterrestrial origins. When word of the curriculum became public, the Air Force in 1970 issued a statement to the effect that the book was outdated and that cadets instead were being informed of the Condon Report's negative conclusion.^[41]

USAF Regulation 200-2

Air Force Regulation 200-2,^[42] issued in 1953 and 1954, defined an Unidentified Flying Object ("UFOB") as "any airborne object which by performance, aerodynamic characteristics, or unusual features, does not conform to any presently known aircraft or missile type, or which cannot be positively identified as a familiar object." The regulation also said UFOBs were to be investigated as a "possible threat to the security of the United States" and "to determine technical aspects involved." The regulation went on to say that "it is permissible to inform news media representatives on UFOB's when the object is positively identified as a familiar object," but added: "For those objects which are not explainable, only the fact that ATIC [Air Technical Intelligence Center] will analyze the data is worthy of release, due to many unknowns involved."^[42]

Project Blue Book

J. Allen Hynek, a trained astronomer who served as a scientific advisor for Project Blue Book, was initially skeptical of UFO reports, but eventually came to the conclusion that many of them could not be satisfactorily explained and was highly critical of what he described as "the cavalier disregard by Project Blue Book of the principles of scientific investigation."^[43] Leaving government work, he founded the privately funded CUFOS, to whose work he devoted the rest of his life. Other private groups studying the phenomenon include the MUFON, a grass roots organization whose investigator's handbooks go into great detail on the documentation of alleged UFO sightings.

Like Hynek, Jacques Vallée, a scientist and prominent UFO researcher, has pointed to what he believes is the scientific deficiency of most UFO research, including government studies. He complains of the mythology and cultism often associated with the phenomenon, but alleges that several hundred professional scientists—a group both he and Hynek have termed "the invisible college"—continue to study UFOs in private.^[25]



Allen Hynek (left) and Jacques Vallée

Scientific studies

The study of UFOs has received little support in mainstream scientific literature. Official studies ended in the U.S. in December 1969, following the statement by the government scientist Edward Condon that further study of UFOs could not be justified on grounds of scientific advancement.^{[15][44]} The Condon Report and its conclusions were endorsed by the National Academy of Scientists, of which Condon was a member. On the other hand, a scientific review by the UFO subcommittee of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) disagreed with Condon's conclusion, noting that at least 30 percent of the cases studied remained unexplained and that scientific benefit might be gained by continued study.

Critics argue that all UFO evidence is anecdotal^[45] and can be explained as prosaic natural phenomena. Defenders of UFO research counter that knowledge of observational data, other than what is reported in the popular media, is limited in the scientific community and that further study is needed.^{[25][46]}

No official government investigation has ever publicly concluded that UFOs are indisputably real, physical objects, extraterrestrial in origin, or of concern to national defense. These same negative conclusions also have been found in studies that were highly classified for many years, such as the UK's Flying Saucer Working Party, Project Condign, the U.S. CIA-sponsored Robertson Panel, the U.S. military investigation into the green fireballs from 1948 to 1951, and the Battelle Memorial Institute study for the USAF from 1952 to 1955 (Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14).

Some public government reports have acknowledged the possibility of physical reality of UFOs, but have stopped short of proposing extraterrestrial origins, though not dismissing the possibility entirely. Examples are the Belgian military investigation into large triangles over their airspace in 1989–1991 and the 2009 Uruguayan Air Force study conclusion (see below).

Some private studies have been neutral in their conclusions, but argued that the inexplicable core cases call for continued scientific study. Examples are the Sturrock panel study of 1998 and the 1970 AIAA review of the Condon Report.

United States

U.S. investigations into UFOs include:

- The Interplanetary Phenomenon Unit (IPU), established by the U.S. Army sometime in the 1940s, and about which little is known. In 1987, British UFO researcher Timothy Good received from the Army's director of counter-intelligence a letter confirming the existence of the IPU. The letter stated that "the aforementioned Army unit was disestablished during the late 1950s and never reactivated. All records pertaining to this unit were surrendered to the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations in conjunction with operation BLUEBOOK." The IPU records have never been released.^[47]
- Project Blue Book, previously Project Sign and Project Grudge, conducted by the USAF from 1947 until 1969
- The secret U.S. Army/Air Force Project Twinkle investigation into green fireballs (1948–1951)
- Ghost rockets investigations by the Swedish, UK, U.S., and Greek militaries (1946–1947)
- The secret CIA Office of Scientific Investigation (OS/I) study (1952–53)
- The secret CIA Robertson Panel (1953)
- The secret USAF Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14 by the Battelle Memorial Institute (1951–1954)
- The Brookings Report (1960), commissioned by NASA
- The public Condon Committee (1966–1968)
- The private, internal RAND Corporation study (1968)^[48]
- The private Sturrock panel (1998)
- The secret Advanced Aviation Threat Identification Program which was funded from 2007 to 2012.^[49]

Thousands of documents released under FOIA also indicate that many U.S. intelligence agencies collected (and still collect) information on UFOs. These agencies include the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), FBI,^[7] CIA, National Security Agency (NSA), as well as military intelligence agencies of the Army and U.S. Navy, in addition to the Air Force.^[note 3]

The investigation of UFOs has also attracted many civilians, who in the U.S formed research groups such as NICAP (active 1956–1980), Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO) (active 1952–1988), MUFON (active 1969–), and CUFOS (active 1973–).

In November 2011, the White House released an official response to two petitions asking the U.S. government to acknowledge formally that aliens have visited this planet and to disclose any intentional withholding of government interactions with extraterrestrial beings. According to the response, "The U.S. government has no evidence that any life exists outside our planet, or that an extraterrestrial presence has contacted or engaged any member of the human race."^{[50][51]} Also, according to the response, there is "no credible information to suggest that any evidence is being hidden from the public's eye."^{[50][51]} The response further noted that efforts, like SETI and NASA's Kepler space telescope and Mars Science Laboratory, continue looking for signs of life. The response noted "odds are pretty high" that there may be life on other planets but "the odds of us making contact with any of them—especially any intelligent ones—are extremely small, given the distances involved."^{[50][51]}

Post-1947 sightings

Following the large U.S. surge in sightings in June and early July 1947, on July 9, 1947, United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) intelligence, in cooperation with the FBI,^[7] began a formal investigation into selected sightings with characteristics that could not be immediately rationalized, such as Kenneth Arnold's. The USAAF used "all of its top scientists" to determine whether "such a phenomenon could, in fact, occur." The research was "being conducted with the thought that the flying objects might be a celestial phenomenon," or that "they might be a foreign body mechanically devised and controlled."^[52] Three weeks later in a preliminary defense estimate, the air force investigation decided that, "This 'flying saucer' situation is not all imaginary or seeing too much in some natural phenomenon. Something is really flying around."^[53]

A further review by the intelligence and technical divisions of the Air Materiel Command at Wright Field reached the same conclusion. It reported that "the phenomenon is something real and not visionary or fictitious," that there were objects in the shape of a disc, metallic in appearance, and as big as man-made aircraft. They were characterized by "extreme rates of climb [and] maneuverability," general lack of noise, absence of trail, occasional formation flying, and "evasive" behavior "when sighted or contacted by friendly aircraft and radar," suggesting a controlled craft. It was therefore recommended in late September 1947 that an official Air Force investigation be set up to investigate the phenomenon. It was also recommended that other government agencies should assist in the investigation.^[note 4]

Project Sign

This led to the creation of the Air Force's Project Sign at the end of 1947, one of the earliest government studies to come to a secret extraterrestrial conclusion. In August 1948, Sign investigators wrote a top-secret intelligence estimate to that effect, but the Air Force Chief of Staff Hoyt Vandenberg ordered it destroyed. The existence of this suppressed report was revealed by several insiders who had read it, such as astronomer and USAF consultant J. Allen Hynek and Capt. Edward J. Ruppelt, the first head of the USAF's Project Blue Book.^[54]

Another highly classified U.S. study was conducted by the CIA's Office of Scientific Investigation (OS/I) in the latter half of 1952 in response to orders from the National Security Council (NSC). This study concluded UFOs were real physical objects of potential threat to national security. One OS/I memo to the CIA Director (DCI) in

December read:

the reports of incidents convince us that there is something going on that must have immediate attention ... Sightings of unexplained objects at great altitudes and traveling at high speeds in the vicinity of major U.S. defense installations are of such a nature that they are not attributable to natural phenomena or any known types of aerial vehicles.

The matter was considered so urgent that OS/I drafted a memorandum from the DCI to the NSC proposing that the NSC establish an investigation of UFOs as a priority project throughout the intelligence and the defense research and development community. It also urged the DCI to establish an external research project of top-level scientists, now known as the Robertson Panel to analyze the problem of UFOs. The OS/I investigation was called off after the Robertson Panel's negative conclusions in January 1953.^[55]

Condon Committee

A public research effort conducted by the Condon Committee for the USAF, which arrived at a negative conclusion in 1968, marked the end of the U.S. government's official investigation of UFOs, though various government intelligence agencies continue unofficially to investigate or monitor the situation.^[note 5]

Controversy has surrounded the Condon Report, both before and after it was released. It has been observed that the report was "harshly criticized by numerous scientists, particularly at the powerful AIAA ... [which] recommended moderate, but continuous scientific work on UFOs."^[15] In an address to the AAAS, James E. McDonald stated that he believed science had failed to mount adequate studies of the problem and criticized the Condon Report and earlier studies by the USAF as scientifically deficient. He also questioned the basis for Condon's conclusions^[56] and argued that the reports of UFOs have been "laughed out of scientific court."^[14] J. Allen Hynek, an astronomer who worked as a USAF consultant from 1948, sharply criticized the Condon Committee Report and later wrote two nontechnical books that set forth the case for continuing to investigate UFO reports.

Ruppelt recounted his experiences with Project Blue Book, a USAF investigation that preceded Condon's.^[57]

Notable cases

- The Roswell UFO incident (1947) involved New Mexico residents, local law enforcement officers, and the U.S. military, the latter of whom allegedly collected physical evidence from the UFO crash site.
- The Mantell UFO incident January 7, 1948
- The Betty and Barney Hill abduction (1961) was the first reported abduction incident.
- In the Kecksburg UFO incident, Pennsylvania (1965), residents reported seeing a bell shaped object crash in the area. Police officers, and possibly military personnel, were sent to investigate.
- The Travis Walton abduction case (1975): The movie *Fire in the Sky* (1993) was based on this event, but greatly embellished the original account.
- The "Phoenix Lights" March 13, 1997
- 2006 O'Hare International Airport UFO sighting

Brazil

On October 31, 2008, the National Archives of Brazil began receiving from the Aeronautical Documentation and History Center part of the documentation of the Brazilian Air Force regarding the investigation of the appearance of UFOs in Brazil. Currently this collection gathers cases between 1952 and 2016.^[58]

Canada

In Canada, the Department of National Defence has dealt with reports, sightings and investigations of UFOs across Canada. In addition to conducting investigations into crop circles in Duhamel, Alberta, it still considers "unsolved" the Falcon Lake incident in Manitoba and the Shag Harbour UFO incident in Nova Scotia.^[59]

Early Canadian studies included Project Magnet (1950–1954) and Project Second Storey (1952–1954), supported by the Defence Research Board.



Document on sighting of a UFO occurred on December 16, 1977, in the state of Bahia, Brazil.

France

On March 2007, the French space agency CNES published an archive of UFO sightings and other phenomena online.^[60]

French studies include GEPAN/SEPRA/GEIPAN (1977–), within CNES (French space agency), the longest ongoing government-sponsored investigation. About 22% of 6000 cases studied remain unexplained.^[61] The official opinion of GEPAN/SEPRA/GEIPAN has been neutral, stating on their FAQ page that their mission is fact-finding for the scientific community, not rendering an opinion. They add they can neither prove nor disprove the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis (ETH), but their Steering Committee's clear position is that they cannot discard the possibility that some fraction of the very strange 22% of unexplained cases might be due to distant and advanced civilizations.^[62] Possibly their bias may be indicated by their use of the terms "PAN" (French) or "UAP" (English equivalent) for "Unidentified *Aerospace* Phenomenon" (whereas "UAP" as normally used by English organizations stands for "Unidentified *Aerial* Phenomenon", a more neutral term). In addition, the three heads of the studies have gone on record in stating that UFOs were real physical flying machines beyond our knowledge or that the best explanation for the most inexplicable cases was an extraterrestrial one.^{[63][64][65]}

In 2008, Michel Scheller, president of the Association Aéronautique et Astronautique de France (3AF), created the Sigma Commission. Its purpose was to investigate UFO phenomenon worldwide.^[66] A progress report published in May 2010 stated that the central hypothesis proposed by the COMETA report is perfectly credible.^[67] In December 2012, the final report of the Sigma Commission was submitted to Scheller. Following the submission of the final report, the Sigma2 Commission is to be formed with a mandate to continue the scientific investigation of UFO phenomenon.^{[68][69]}

The most notable cases of UFO sightings in France include the Valensole UFO incident in 1965, and the Trans-en-Provence Case in 1981.

Italy

According to some Italian ufologists, the first documented case of a UFO sighting in Italy dates back to April 11, 1933, to Varese. Documents of the time show that an alleged UFO crashed or landed near Vergiate. Following this, Benito Mussolini created a secret group to look at it, called Cabinet RS/33.^{[70][71]}

Alleged UFO sightings gradually increased since the war, peaking in 1978 and 2005. The total number of sightings since 1947 are 18,500, of which 90% are identifiable.^[72]

In 2000, Italian ufologist Roberto Pinotti published material regarding the so-called "Fascist UFO Files", which dealt with a flying saucer that had crashed near Milan in 1933 (some 14 years before the Roswell, New Mexico, crash), and of the subsequent investigation by a never mentioned before Cabinet RS/33, that allegedly was

authorized by Benito Mussolini, and headed by the Nobel scientist Guglielmo Marconi. A spaceship was allegedly stored in the hangars of the SIAI Marchetti in Vergiate near Milan.^[73]

Julius Obsequens was a Roman writer who is believed to have lived in the middle of the fourth century AD. The only work associated with his name is the *Liber de prodigiis* (Book of Prodigies), completely extracted from an epitome, or abridgment, written by Livy; *De prodigiis* was constructed as an account of the wonders and portents that occurred in Rome between 249 BC-12 BC. An aspect of Obsequens' work that has inspired much interest in some circles is that references are made to things moving through the sky. These have been interpreted as reports of UFOs, but may just as well describe meteors, and, since Obsequens, probably, writes in the 4th century, that is, some 400 years after the events he describes, they hardly qualify as eye-witness accounts.^{[74][75]}

Notable cases

- A UFO sighting in Florence, October 28, 1954, followed by a fall of angel hair.^[76]
- In 1973, an Alitalia airplane left Rome for Naples sighted a mysterious round object. Two Italian Air Force planes from Ciampino confirmed the sighting.^[77] In the same year there was another sighting at Caselle airport near Turin.^[78]
- In 1978, two young hikers, while walking on Monte Musinè near Turin, saw a bright light; one of them temporarily disappeared and, after a while, was found in a state of shock and with a noticeable scald on one leg. After regaining consciousness, he reported having seen an elongated vehicle and that some strangely shaped beings descended from it. Both the young hikers suffered from conjunctivitis for some time.^[79]
- A close encounter reported in September 1978 in Torrita di Siena in the Province of Siena. A young motorist saw in front of him a bright object, two beings of small stature who wore suits and helmets, the two approached the car, and after watching it carefully went back and rose again to the UFO. A boy who lived with his family in a country house not far from there said he had seen at the same time "a kind of small reddish sun".^[80]
- Yet in 1978, there has been also the story of Pier Fortunato Zanfretta, the best known and most controversial case of an Italian alleged alien abduction. Zanfretta said (also with truth serum injected) to have been kidnapped by reptilian-like creatures on the night of 6 December and 7 December while he was performing his job at Marzano, in the municipality of Torriglia in the Province of Genoa.^[81] 52 testimonies of the case from other people were collected.^[81]

United Kingdom

The UK's Flying Saucer Working Party published its final report in June 1951, which remained secret for over 50 years. The Working Party concluded that all UFO sightings could be explained as misidentifications of ordinary objects or phenomena, optical illusions, psychological misperceptions/aberrations, or hoaxes. The report stated: "We accordingly recommend very strongly that no further investigation of reported mysterious aerial phenomena be undertaken, unless and until some material evidence becomes available."^[82]

Eight file collections on UFO sightings, dating from 1978 to 1987, were first released on May 14, 2008, to The National Archives by the Ministry of Defence (MoD).^[83] Although kept secret from the public for many years, most of the files have low levels of classification and none are classified Top Secret. 200 files are set to be made public by 2012. The files are correspondence from the public sent to the British government and officials, such as the MoD and Margaret Thatcher. The MoD released the files under the Freedom of Information Act due to requests from researchers.^[84] These files include, but are not limited to, UFOs over Liverpool and the Waterloo Bridge in London.^[85]

On October 20, 2008, more UFO files were released. One case released detailed that in 1991 an Alitalia passenger aircraft was approaching London Heathrow Airport when the pilots saw what they described as a "cruise missile" fly extremely close to the cockpit. The pilots believed that a collision was imminent. UFO expert David Clarke says that this is one of the most convincing cases for a UFO he has come across.^[86]

A secret study of UFOs was undertaken for the Ministry of Defence between 1996 and 2000 and was code-named Project Condign. The resulting report, titled "Unidentified Aerial Phenomena in the UK Defence Region", was publicly released in 2006, but the identity and credentials of whomever constituted Project Condign remains classified. The report confirmed earlier findings that the main causes of UFO sightings are misidentification of man-made and natural objects. The report noted: "No artefacts of unknown or unexplained origin have been reported or handed to the UK authorities, despite thousands of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena reports. There are no SIGINT, ELINT or radiation measurements and little useful video or still IMINT." It concluded: "There is no evidence that any UAP, seen in the UKADR [UK Air Defence Region], are incursions by air-objects of any intelligent (extraterrestrial or foreign) origin, or that they represent any hostile intent." A little-discussed conclusion of the report was that novel meteorological plasma phenomenon akin to ball lightning are responsible for "the majority, if not all" of otherwise inexplicable sightings, especially reports of black triangle UFOs.^[87]

On December 1, 2009, the Ministry of Defence quietly closed down its UFO investigations unit. The unit's hotline and email address were suspended by the MoD on that date. The MoD said there was no value in continuing to receive and investigate sightings in a release, stating

in over fifty years, no UFO report has revealed any evidence of a potential threat to the United Kingdom. The MoD has no specific capability for identifying the nature of such sightings. There is no Defence benefit in such investigation and it would be an inappropriate use of defence resources. Furthermore, responding to reported UFO sightings diverts MoD resources from tasks that are relevant to Defence."

The Guardian reported that the MoD claimed the closure would save the Ministry around £50,000 a year. The MoD said that it would continue to release UFO files to the public through The National Archives.^[88]

Notable cases

According to records released on August 5, 2010, British wartime prime minister Winston Churchill banned the reporting for 50 years of an alleged UFO incident because of fears it could create mass panic. Reports given to Churchill asserted that the incident involved a Royal Air Force (RAF) reconnaissance aircraft returning from a mission in France or Germany toward the end of World War II. It was over or near the English coastline when it was allegedly intercepted by a strange metallic object that matched the aircraft's course and speed for a time before accelerating away and disappearing. The aircraft's crew were reported to have photographed the object, which they said had "hovered noiselessly" near the aircraft, before moving off.^[89] According to the documents, details of the coverup emerged when a man wrote to the government in 1999 seeking to find out more about the incident and described how his grandfather, who had served with the RAF in the war, was present when Churchill and U.S. General Dwight D. Eisenhower discussed how to deal with the UFO encounter.^{[90][91]} The files come from more than 5,000 pages of UFO reports, letters and drawings from members of the public, as well as questions raised in Parliament. They are available to download from The National Archives website.^[83]

In the April 1957 West Freugh incident in Scotland, named after the principal military base involved, two unidentified objects flying high over the UK were tracked by radar operators. The objects were reported to operate at speeds and perform maneuvers beyond the capability of any known craft. Also significant is their alleged size, which – based on the radar returns – was closer to that of a ship than an aircraft.

In the Rendlesham Forest incident of December 1980, U.S. military personnel witnessed UFOs near the air base at Woodbridge, Suffolk, over a period of three nights. On one night the deputy base commander, Colonel Charles I. Halt, and other personnel followed one or more UFOs that were moving in and above the forest for several hours. Col. Halt made an audio recording while this was happening and subsequently wrote an official memorandum

summarizing the incident. After retirement from the military, he said that he had deliberately downplayed the event (officially termed 'Unexplained Lights') to avoid damaging his career. Other base personnel are said to have observed one of the UFOs, which had landed in the forest, and even gone up to and touched it.

Uruguay

The Uruguayan Air Force has conducted UFO investigations since 1989 and reportedly analyzed 2,100 cases of which they regard approximately 2% as lacking explanation.^[92]

Astronomer reports

The USAF's Project Blue Book files indicate that approximately 1%^[93] of all unknown reports came from amateur and professional astronomers or other users of telescopes (such as missile trackers or surveyors). In 1952, astronomer J. Allen Hynek, then a consultant to Blue Book, conducted a small survey of 45 fellow professional astronomers. Five reported UFO sightings (about 11%). In the 1970s, astrophysicist Peter A. Sturrock conducted two large surveys of the AIAA and American Astronomical Society (AAS). About 5% of the members polled indicated that they had had UFO sightings.

Astronomer Clyde Tombaugh, who admitted to six UFO sightings, including three green fireballs, supported the Extraterrestrial hypothesis for UFOs and stated he thought scientists who dismissed it without study were being "unscientific." Another astronomer was Lincoln LaPaz, who had headed the Air Force's investigation into the green fireballs and other UFO phenomena in New Mexico. LaPaz reported two personal sightings, one of a green fireball, the other of an anomalous disc-like object. (Both Tombaugh and LaPaz were part of Hynek's 1952 survey.) Hynek himself took two photos through the window of a commercial airliner of a disc-like object that seemed to pace his aircraft.^[94]

In 1980, a survey of 1800 members of various amateur astronomer associations by Gert Helb and Hynek for CUFOS found that 24% responded "yes" to the question "Have you ever observed an object which resisted your most exhaustive efforts at identification?"^[95]

Claims of increase in reports

MUFON reports that UFO sightings to their offices have increased by 67% in the previous three years as of 2011. According to MUFON international director Clifford Clift in 2011, "Over the past year, we've been averaging 500 sighting reports a month, compared to about 300 three years ago [67 percent]".^{[96][97]}

According to the annual survey of reports conducted by Canadian-based UFO research group Ufology Research, reported UFO sightings doubled in Canada between 2011 and 2012.^{[98][99]}

In 2013 the Peruvian government's Departamento de Investigación de Fenómenos Aéreos Anómalos (Anomalous Aerial Phenomena Research Department), or "DIFAA", was officially reactivated due to an increase in reported sightings. According to Colonel Julio Vucetich, head of the air force's aerospace interests division who himself claims to have seen an "anomalous aerial object", "On a personal basis, it's evident to me that we are not alone in this world or universe."^{[100][101]}

In contrast, according to the UK-based Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena (ASSAP), reports of sightings in Britain to their office have declined by 96% since 1988.^[102]

Identification of UFOs

Studies show that after careful investigation, the majority of UFOs can be identified as ordinary objects or phenomena. The most commonly found identified sources of UFO reports are:

- Astronomical objects (bright stars, planets, meteors, re-entering man-made spacecraft, artificial satellites, and the Moon)
- Aircraft (aerial advertising and other aircraft, missile launches)
- Balloons (toy balloons, weather balloons, large research balloons)
- Other atmospheric objects and phenomena (birds, unusual clouds, kites, flares)
- Light phenomena mirages, Fata Morgana, ball lightning, moon dogs, searchlights and other ground lights, etc.
- Hoaxes

A 1952–1955 study by the Battelle Memorial Institute for the USAF included these categories as well as a "psychological" one.

An individual 1979 study by CUFOS researcher Allan Hendry found, as did other investigations, that only a small percentage of cases he investigated were hoaxes (<1 %) and that most sightings were actually honest misidentifications of prosaic phenomena. Hendry attributed most of these to inexperience or misperception.^[104]

Claims by military, government, and aviation personnel

Since 2001 there have been calls for greater openness on the part of the government by various persons. In May 2001, a press conference was held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., by an organization called the Disclosure Project, featuring twenty persons including retired Air Force and FAA personnel, intelligence officers and an air traffic controller.^{[105][106][107][108][109][110][111]} They all gave a brief account of what they knew or had witnessed, and stated that they would be willing to testify to what they had said under oath to a Congressional committee. According to a 2002 report in the Oregon Daily Emerald, Disclosure Project founder Steven M. Greer has gathered 120 hours of testimony from various government officials on the topic of UFOs, including astronaut Gordon Cooper and a Brigadier General.^[112]

In 2007, former Arizona governor Fife Symington came forward and belatedly claimed that he had seen "a massive, delta-shaped craft silently navigate over Squaw Peak, a mountain range in Phoenix, Arizona" in 1997.^[113]

On September 27, 2010, a group of six former USAF officers and one former enlisted Air Force man held a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on the theme "U.S. Nuclear Weapons Have Been Compromised by Unidentified Aerial Objects."^[114] They told how they had witnessed UFOs hovering near missile sites and even disarming the missiles.

From April 29 to May 3, 2013, the Paradigm Research Group held the "Citizen Hearing on Disclosure" at the National Press Club. The group paid former U.S. Senator Mike Gravel and former Representatives Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick, Roscoe Bartlett, Merrill Cook, Darlene Hooley, and Lynn Woolsey \$20,000 each to hear testimony from a panel of researchers which included witnesses from military, agency, and political backgrounds.^{[115][116]}

Apollo 14 astronaut Dr Edgar Mitchell claimed that he knew of senior government employees who had been



Fata Morgana, a type of mirage in which objects located *below* the astronomical horizon appear to be hovering in the sky just above the horizon, may be responsible for some UFO sightings. (Here, the shape floating above the horizon is the reflected image of a boat.) Fata Morgana can also distort the appearance of distant objects, sometimes making them unrecognizable^[103]



Lenticular clouds have in some cases been reported as UFOs due to their peculiar shape

involved in "close encounters" and because of this he has no doubt that aliens have visited Earth.^[117]

Extraterrestrial hypothesis

While technically a *UFO* refers to any unidentified flying object, in modern popular culture the term UFO has generally become synonymous with alien spacecraft;^[118] however, the term ETV (ExtraTerrestrial Vehicle) is sometimes used to separate this explanation of UFOs from totally earthbound explanations.^[119]

Associated claims

Besides anecdotal visual sightings, reports sometimes include claims of other kinds of evidence, including cases studied by the military and various government agencies of different countries (such as Project Blue Book, the Condon Committee, the French GEPAN/SEPRA, and Uruguay's current Air Force study).

A comprehensive scientific review of cases where physical evidence was available was carried out by the 1998 Sturrock panel, with specific examples of many of the categories listed below.^{[120][121][122]}

- Radar contact and tracking, sometimes from multiple sites. These have included military personnel and control tower operators, simultaneous visual sightings, and aircraft intercepts. One such example were the mass sightings of large, silent, low-flying black triangles in 1989 and 1990 over Belgium, tracked by NATO radar and jet interceptors, and investigated by Belgium's military (included photographic evidence).^[123] Another famous case from 1986 was the Japan Air Lines flight 1628 incident over Alaska investigated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).
- Photographic evidence, including still photos, movie film, and video.
- Claims of physical trace of landing UFOs, including ground impressions, burned or desiccated soil, burned and broken foliage, magnetic anomalies, increased radiation levels, and metallic traces. (See, e. g. Height 611 UFO incident or the 1964 Lonnie Zamora's Socorro, New Mexico encounter of the USAF Project Blue Book cases.) A well-known example from December 1980 was the USAF Rendlesham Forest incident in England. Another occurred in January 1981 in Trans-en-Provence and was investigated by GEPAN, then France's official government UFO-investigation agency. Project Blue Book head Edward J. Ruppelt described a classic 1952 CE2 case involving a patch of charred grass roots.
- Physiological effects on people and animals including temporary paralysis, skin burns and rashes, corneal burns, and symptoms superficially resembling radiation poisoning, such as the Cash-Landrum incident in 1980.
- Animal/cattle mutilation cases, that some feel are also part of the UFO phenomenon.
- Biological effects on plants such as increased or decreased growth, germination effects on seeds, and blown-out stem nodes (usually associated with physical trace cases or crop circles)
- Electromagnetic interference (EM) effects. A famous 1976 military case over Tehran, recorded in CIA and DIA classified documents, was associated with communication losses in multiple aircraft and weapons system failure in an F-4 Phantom II jet interceptor as it was about to fire a missile on one of the UFOs.^[124]
- Apparent remote radiation detection, some noted in FBI and CIA documents occurring over government nuclear installations at Los Alamos National Laboratory and Oak Ridge National Laboratory in 1950, also reported by Project Blue Book director Edward J. Ruppelt in his book.
- Claimed artifacts of UFOs themselves, such as 1957, Ubatuba, Brazil, magnesium fragments analyzed by the Brazilian government and in the Condon Report and by others. The 1964 Lonnie Zamora incident also left metal traces, analyzed by NASA.^{[125][126]} A more recent example involves a tear drop-shaped object recovered by Bob White and was featured in a television episode of UFO Hunters.^[127]
- Angel hair and angel grass, possibly explained in some cases as nests from ballooning spiders or chaff.

Ufology

Ufology is a neologism describing the collective efforts of those who study UFO reports and associated evidence.

Researchers

Sightings

Organizations

Categorization

Some ufologists recommend that observations be classified according to the features of the phenomenon or object that are reported or recorded.

Typical categories include:

- Saucer, toy-top, or disk-shaped "craft" without visible or audible propulsion.
- Large triangular "craft" or triangular light pattern, usually reported at night.
- Cigar-shaped "craft" with lighted windows (meteor fireballs are sometimes reported this way, but are very different phenomena).
- Other: chevrons, (equilateral) triangles, crescent, boomerangs, spheres (usually reported to be shining, glowing at night), domes, diamonds, shapeless black masses, eggs, pyramids and cylinders, classic "lights."

Popular UFO classification systems include the Hynek system, created by J. Allen Hynek, and the Vallée system, created by Jacques Vallée.

Hynek's system involves dividing the sighted object by appearance, subdivided further into the type of "close encounter" (a term from which the film director Steven Spielberg derived the title of his 1977 UFO movie, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*).

Jacques Vallée's system classifies UFOs into five broad types, each with from three to five subtypes that vary according to type.

Scientific skepticism

A scientifically skeptical group that has for many years offered critical analysis of UFO claims is the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI).

One example is the response to local beliefs that "extraterrestrial beings" in UFOs were responsible for crop circles appearing in Indonesia, which the government and the National Institute of Aeronautics and Space (LAPAN) described as "man-made". Thomas Djameluddin, research professor of astronomy and astrophysics at LAPAN stated: "We have come to agree that this 'thing' cannot be scientifically proven. Scientists have put UFOs in the category of pseudoscience."^[128]

Conspiracy theories

UFOs are sometimes an element of conspiracy theories in which governments are allegedly intentionally "covering up" the existence of aliens by removing physical evidence of their presence, or even collaborating with extraterrestrial beings. There are many versions of this story; some are exclusive, while others overlap with various other conspiracy theories.

In the U.S., an opinion poll conducted in 1997 suggested that 80% of Americans believed the U.S. government was withholding such information.^{[129][130]} Various notables have also expressed such views. Some examples are



Photograph of "an unusual atmospheric occurrence observed over Sri Lanka", forwarded to the UK Ministry of Defence by RAF Fylingdales, 2004

astronauts Gordon Cooper and Edgar Mitchell, Senator Barry Goldwater, Vice Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter (the first CIA director), Lord Hill-Norton (former British Chief of Defense Staff and NATO head), the 1999 French COMETA study by various French generals and aerospace experts, and Yves Sillard (former director of CNES, new director of French UFO research organization GEIPAN).^[60]

It has also been suggested by a few paranormal authors that all or most human technology and culture is based on extraterrestrial contact (see also ancient astronauts).

Famous hoaxes

- The Maury Island incident
- George Adamski, over the space of two decades, made various claims about his meetings with telepathic aliens from nearby planets. He claimed that photographs of the far side of the Moon taken by the Soviet lunar probe Luna 3 in 1959 were fake, and that there were cities, trees and snow-capped mountains on the far side of the Moon. Among copycats was a shadowy British figure named Cedric Allingham.
- Ed Walters, a building contractor, in 1987 allegedly perpetrated a hoax in Gulf Breeze, Florida. Walters claimed at first having seen a small UFO flying near his home and took some photographs of the craft. Walters reported and documented a series of UFO sightings over a period of three weeks and took several photographs. These sightings became famous, and are collectively referred to as the Gulf Breeze UFO incident. Three years later, in 1990, after the Walters family had moved, the new residents discovered a model of a UFO poorly hidden in the attic that bore an undeniable resemblance to the craft in Walters' photographs. Most investigators, like the forensic photo expert William G. Hyzer,^[131] now consider the sightings to be a hoax.

In popular culture

UFOs have constituted a widespread international cultural phenomenon since the 1950s. Gallup Polls rank UFOs near the top of lists for subjects of widespread recognition. In 1973, a survey found that 95 percent of the public reported having heard of UFOs, whereas only 92 percent had heard of U.S. President Gerald Ford in a 1977 poll taken just nine months after he left the White House.^{[132][133]} A 1996 Gallup Poll reported that 71 percent of the United States population believed that the U.S. government was covering up information regarding UFOs. A 2002 Roper Poll for the Sci-Fi Channel found similar results, but with more people believing that UFOs are extraterrestrial craft. In that latest poll, 56 percent thought UFOs were real craft and 48 percent that aliens had visited the Earth. Again, about 70 percent felt the government was not sharing everything it knew about UFOs or extraterrestrial life.^{[134][135]}

Another effect of the flying saucer type of UFO sightings has been Earth-made flying saucer craft in space fiction, for example the United Planets Cruiser C57D in *Forbidden Planet* (1956), the *Jupiter 2* in *Lost in Space*, and the saucer section of the USS Enterprise in *Star Trek*, and many others.

UFOs and extraterrestrials have been featured in many movies.

See also



A UFO Monument at Tenjo, Colombia.

- [Kenneth Arnold UFO sighting](#)
- [Kosmopoisk](#)
- [List of alleged aircraft–UFO incidents and near misses](#)
- [Majestic 12](#)
- [Mystery airship](#)
- [Psychosocial hypothesis](#)
- [UFO religion](#)
- [Ufology](#)
- [Unidentified submerged object or USO](#)

Notes

1. For example, the USAF's [Project Blue Book](#) concluded that less than 2 % of reported UFOs were "psychological" or hoaxes; Allan Hendry's study for CUFOs had less than 1 %.
2. For example, current USAF general reporting procedures are in [Air Force Instruction \(AFI\)10-206](#) (<http://www.theblackvault.com/documents/ufos/AFI10-206.pdf>). Section 5.7.3 (p. 64) lists sightings of "unidentified flying objects" and "aircraft of unconventional design" as separate categories from potentially hostile but conventional, unidentified aircraft, missiles, surface vessels, or submarines. Additionally, "unidentified objects" detected by missile warning systems, creating a potential risk of nuclear war, are covered by Rule 5E (p.35).
3. Many of these documents are now online at the FOIA websites of these agencies such as the ["FBI FOIA site"](#) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20080524114748/http://foia.fbi.gov/foiaindex/ufo.htm>). Archived from the original on May 24, 2008. Retrieved August 9, 2007., as well as private websites such as [The Black Vault](#) (<http://www.theblackvault.com/>), which has an archive of several thousand U.S. government UFO-related documents from the USAF, Army, CIA, DIA, DOD, and NSA.
4. The so-called [Twining memo](#) of Sept. 23, 1947 (http://www.majesticdocuments.com/pdf/twiningopinionamc_23sept47.pdf), by future USAF Chief of Staff, General [Nathan Twining](#), specifically recommended intelligence cooperation with the Army, Navy, Atomic Energy Commission, the Defense Department's Joint Research and Development Board, Air Force Scientific Advisory Board, [National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics](#) (NACA), Project [RAND](#), and the [Nuclear Energy for the Propulsion of Aircraft](#) (NEPA) project.
5. See, e.g., the [1976 Tehran UFO incident](#) where a Defense Intelligence Agency report on the event had a distribution list that included the White House, Secretary of State, Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Security Agency (NSA), and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Several thousand UFO-related pages of more recent vintage from the CIA, NSA, DIA, and other agencies have also been released and can be viewed online. "Archived copy" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20090602185537/http://community.theblackvault.com/articles/entry/All-UFO-Documents-From->). Archived from the original (<http://community.theblackvault.com/articles/entry/All-UFO-Documents-From->) on June 2, 2009. Retrieved June 10, 2009.

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3. [Keyhoe 1953](#)
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- "Canada's UFOs: The Search for the Unknown" (<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/ufo/>), a virtual museum exhibition by the Library and Archives Canada
- Declassified files – on UFOs from many countries (<http://that1archive.neocities.org/subfolder1/ufo-files.html>)
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Ufology

Ufology is the study of reports, visual records, physical evidence, and other phenomena related to unidentified flying objects (UFO). UFO reports have been subject to various investigations over the years by governments, independent groups, and scientists. However, ufology, as a field, is rejected by modern academia and is considered a pseudoscience.

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Etymology

The term derives from *UFO*, which is pronounced as an *acronym*, and the suffix *-logy*, which comes from the *Ancient Greek* *λογία* (*logiā*). An early appearance of this term in print can be found in the article "An Introduction to Ufology" by Ivan T. Sanderson, found in *Fantastic Universe* magazine's February 1957 issue (Vol. 7, No. 2), which closes with this direct plea: "What we need, in fact, is the immediate establishment of a respectable new science named Ufology." ^[1] Another early use of the word was in a 1958 speech given at the opening of The Planetary Center, a UFO research organization near *Detroit, Michigan*^[2]. Another early use, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one of the first documented uses of the word *ufology* can be found in the *Times Literary Supplement* from January 23, 1959, in which it writes, "The articles, reports, and bureaucratic studies which have been written about this perplexing visitant constitute 'ufology'." This article was printed eight years after *Edward J. Ruppelt* of the *United States Air Force* (USAF) coined the word *UFO* in 1951.

Historical background

The modern UFO mythology has three traceable roots: the late 19th century "*mystery airships*" reported in the newspapers of the western United States, "*foo fighters*" reported by Allied airmen during *World War II*, and the *Kenneth Arnold* "*flying saucer*" sighting near *Mt. Rainier, Washington* on June 24, 1947.^[3] UFO reports between "The Great Airship Wave" and the Arnold sighting were limited in number compared to the post-war period: notable cases include reports of "ghost fliers" in *Europe* and *North America* during the 1930s and the numerous reports of "ghost rockets" in *Scandinavia* (mostly *Sweden*) from May to December 1946.^[4] Media hype in the late 1940s and early 1950s following the Arnold sighting brought the concept of flying saucers to the public audience.^[5]

As the public's preoccupation in UFOs grew, along with the number of reported sightings, the United States military began to take notice of the phenomenon. The UFO explosion of the early post-war era coincides with the escalation of the *Cold War* and the *Korean War*.^[3] The U.S. military feared that secret aircraft of the *Soviet Union*, possibly developed from captured German technology, were behind the reported sightings.^[6] If correct, the craft causing the sightings were thus of importance to national security^[7] and in need of systematic investigation. By 1952, however, the official US government interest in UFOs began to fade as the USAF projects *Sign* and *Grudge* concluded, along with the *CIA's* *Robertson Panel* that UFO reports indicated no direct threat to national security.^[8] The government's official research into UFOs ended with the publication of the *Condon Committee* report in 1969,^[8] which concluded that the study of UFOs in the previous 21 years had achieved little, if anything, and that further extensive study of UFO sightings was unwarranted.^[8] It also recommended the termination of the USAF special unit *Project Blue Book*.^[8]

As the U.S. government ceased officially studying UFO sightings, the same became true for most governments of the world. A notable exception is *France*, which still maintains the *GEIPAN*,^[9] formerly known as *GEPAN*



A Swedish Air Force officer searches for a "ghost rocket" in Lake Kõlmjärv, Norrland, Sweden, in July 1946.

(1977–1988) and SEPRA (1988–2004), a unit under the French Space Agency CNES. During the Cold War, British,^[10] Canadian,^[11] Danish,^[12] Italian,^[13] and Swedish^[14] governments have each collected reports of UFO sightings. Britain's Ministry of Defence ceased accepting any new reports as of 2010.^[15]

Status as a field

Ufology has generally not been embraced by academia as a scientific field of study,^{[16][17]} even though UFOs were, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, the subject of large-scale scientific studies. The lack of acceptance of ufology by academia as a field of study means that people can claim to be "UFO researchers", without the sorts of scientific consensus building and, in many cases peer review, that otherwise shape and influence scientific paradigms. Even among scientifically inclined UFO research efforts, data collecting is often done by amateur investigators.^[16]

Famous mainstream scientists who have shown interest in the UFO phenomenon include Stanford physicist Peter A. Sturrock,^[18] astronomer J. Allen Hynek,^[19] computer scientist and astronomer Jacques F. Vallée,^[20] and University of Arizona meteorologist James E. McDonald.^[21]

As a pseudoscience

Ufology is characterized by scientific criticism as a partial^[22] or total^{[23][24]} pseudoscience, a characterization which many ufologists reject.^[25] *Pseudoscience* is a term that classifies studies that are claimed to exemplify the methods and principles of science, but that do not adhere to an appropriate scientific method, lack supporting evidence, plausibility, falsifiability, or otherwise lack scientific status.^{[26][27]}

Gregory Feist, an academic psychologist, proposes that ufology can be categorized as a pseudoscience because its adherents claim it to be a science while the scientific community denies that it is, and because the field lacks a cumulative scientific progress; ufology has not, in his view, advanced since the 1950s.^[28] Rachel Cooper, a philosopher of science and medicine, states that the fundamental problem in ufology is not the lack of scientific method, as many ufologists have striven to meet standards of scientific acceptability, but rather the fact that the assumptions on which the research is often based are considered highly speculative.^[29]

Stanton Friedman considers the general attitude of mainstream academics as arrogant and dismissive, or bound to a rigid worldview that disallows any evidence contrary to previously held notions.^[30] Denzler states that the fear of ridicule and a loss of status has prevented scientists from publicly pursuing an interest in UFOs.^[31] J. Allen Hynek also commented, "Ridicule is not part of the scientific method and people should not be taught that it is."^[32] Hynek said of the frequent dismissal of UFO reports by astronomers that the critics knew little about the sightings, and should thus not be taken seriously.^[33] Peter A. Sturrock suggests that a lack of funding is a major factor in the institutional lack of interest in UFOs.^[34]

Methodological issues

Scientific UFO research suffers from the fact that the phenomena under observation do not usually make predictable appearances at a time and place convenient for the researcher.^[35] Ufologist Diana Palmer Hoyt argues,

The UFO problem seems to bear a closer resemblance to problems in meteorology than in physics. The phenomena are observed, occur episodically, are not reproducible, and in large part, are identified by statistical gathering of data for possible organization into patterns. They are not experiments that can be replicated at will at the laboratory bench under controlled conditions.^[36]

On the other hand, skeptics have argued that UFOs are not a scientific problem at all, as there is no tangible

physical evidence to study.^{[17][35]} Barry Markovsky argues that, under scrutiny by qualified investigators, the vast majority of UFO sightings turn out to have mundane explanations.^[37] Astronomer Carl Sagan stated on UFO sightings, "The reliable cases are uninteresting and the interesting cases are unreliable. Unfortunately there are no cases that are both reliable and interesting."^[38]

Peter A. Sturrock states that UFO studies should be compartmentalized into at least "the following distinct activities":^[39]

1. Field investigations leading to case documentation and the measurement or retrieval of physical evidence;
2. Laboratory analysis of physical evidence;
3. The systematic compilation of data (descriptive and physical) to look for patterns and so extract significant facts;
4. The analysis of compilations of data (descriptive and physical) to look for patterns and so extract significant facts;
5. The development of theories and the evaluation of those theories on the basis of facts.

Denzler states that ufology as a field of study has branched into two different mindsets: the first group of investigators wants to convince the unbelievers and earn intellectual legitimacy through systematic study using the scientific method, and the second group sees the follow-up questions concerning the origin and "mission" of the UFOs as more important than a potential academic standing.^[40]

UFO categorization

Hynek system

Developed in the 1970s, J. Allen Hynek's original system of description divides sightings into six categories.^[41] It first separates sightings into distant- and close-encounter categories, arbitrarily setting five hundred feet as the cutoff point. It then subdivides these close and distant categories based on appearance or special features:

- **Nocturnal Lights (NL)**: Anomalous lights seen in the night sky.
- **Daylight Discs (DD)**: Any anomalous object, generally but not necessarily "discoidal", seen in the distant daytime sky.
- **Radar/Visual cases (RV)**: Objects seen simultaneously by eye and on radar.

Hynek also defined three close encounter (CE) subcategories:

- **CE1**: Strange objects seen nearby but without physical interaction with the environment.
- **CE2**: A CE1 case that leaves physical evidence, e.g. soil depressions, vegetation damage, radiations or causes electromagnetic interference.
- **CE3**: CE1 or CE2 cases where occupants or entities are seen.

Later, Hynek introduced a fourth category, **CE4**, which is used to describe cases where the witness feels he was abducted by a UFO.^[42] Some ufologists have adopted a fifth category, **CE5**, which involves conscious human-initiated contact with extraterrestrial intelligence.^[42]

Vallée system

Jacques Vallée has devised a UFO classification system, where the UFO sightings of four different categories are divided into five subcategories:^[43]



Josef Allen Hynek (left) and Jacques Vallée

- Close Encounter (CE): As per Hynek.
- Maneuver (MA): Trajectory discontinuity in flight.
- Fly-by (FB): No observed discontinuity in flight.
- Anomaly (AN): Unusual lights or unexplained entities.

The five subcategories can apply to all previous categories of sightings:

1. Sighting
2. Physical effects: for example, radar sighting
3. Life form or living entity
4. Reality transformation: witnesses experienced a transformation of their sense of reality (often corresponding to the popular characterization of the incident as an abduction)
5. Physiological impact: Such as death or serious injury

Thus, the Vallée categorization categorizes cases as MA-2, AN-1, CE-4, for example.

Ufology and UFO reports

In addition to UFO sightings, certain supposedly related phenomena are of interest to some in the field of ufology, including crop circles,^[44] cattle mutilations,^[45] and alien abductions and implants.^[46] Some ufologists have also promoted UFO conspiracy theories, including the alleged Roswell UFO Incident of 1947,^{[47][48][49]} the Majestic 12 documents,^[50] and UFO disclosure advocates.^{[51][52]}

Skeptic Robert Sheaffer has accused ufology of having a "credulity explosion".^[53] He claims a trend of increasingly sensational ideas steadily gaining popularity within ufology.^[53] Sheaffer remarked, "the kind of stories generating excitement and attention in any given year would have been rejected by mainstream ufologists a few years earlier for being too outlandish."^[53]

Likewise, James McDonald has expressed the view that extreme groups undermined serious scientific investigation, stating that a "bizarre 'literature' of pseudo-scientific discussion" on "spaceships bringing messengers of terrestrial salvation and occult truth" had been "one of the prime factors in discouraging serious scientists from looking into the UFO matter to the extent that might have led them to recognize quickly enough that cultism and wishful thinking have nothing to do with the core of the UFO problem."^[54] In the same statement, McDonald said that, "Again, one must here criticize a good deal of armchair-researching (done chiefly via the daily newspapers that enjoy feature-writing the antics of the more extreme of such subgroups). A disturbing number of prominent scientists have jumped all too easily to the conclusion that only the nuts see UFOs".^[54]

Surveys of scientists and amateur astronomers concerning UFOs

In 1973, Peter A. Sturrock conducted a survey among members of the San Francisco chapter of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, where 1175 questionnaires were mailed and 423 were returned, and found no consensus concerning the nature and scientific importance of the UFO phenomenon, with views ranging equally from "impossible" to "certain" in reply to the question, "Do UFOs represent a scientifically significant phenomenon?"^[55] In a later larger survey conducted among the members of the American Astronomical Society, where 2611 were questionnaires mailed and 1356 were returned, Sturrock found out that opinions were equally diverse, with 23% replying "certainly", 30% "probably", 27% "possibly", 17% "probably not", and 3% "certainly not", to the question of whether the UFO problem deserves scientific study.^[56] Sturrock also asked in the same survey if the surveyee had witnessed any event which they could not have identified and which could have been related to the UFO phenomenon, with around 5% replying affirmatively.^[56]

In 1980, a survey of 1800 members of various amateur astronomer associations by Gert Herb and J. Allen Hynek

of the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) found that 24% responded "yes" to the question, "Have you ever observed an object which resisted your most exhaustive efforts at identification?"^[57]

Studies, panels, and conferences

Project Sign, Project Grudge (US, 1947–1949)

The first official USAF investigations of UFOs were Project Sign (1947–1949) and its successor Project Grudge (1949). Several hundred sightings were examined, a majority of them having a mundane explanation.^[58] Some sightings were classified as credible but inexplicable, and in these cases the possibility of an advanced unknown aircraft could not be ruled out.^[59] The initial memos of the project took the UFO question seriously. After surveying 16 early reports, Lt. Col. George D. Garrett estimated that the sightings were not imaginary or exaggerations of natural phenomena.^[60] Lt. General Nathan F. Twining expressed the same estimate in a letter to Brig. General Schulgen, and urged a concerted investigation by the Air Force and other government agencies.^[61] Twining's memo led to the formation of Project Sign at the end of 1947. In the summer of 1948, Sign's first intelligence estimate (Estimate of the Situation) concluded that some UFO reports were extraterrestrial in origin. The rejection of the estimate by USAF Chief of Staff Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg led to the dissolution of Sign and the formation of Project Grudge.



Nathan F. Twining

Flying Saucer Working Party (UK, 1950–1951)

The United Kingdom's Ministry of Defence, alarmed by reports of seemingly advanced unidentified aircraft, followed the US military's example by conducting its own study on UFOs in 1950.^[62] A research group was formed based on the recommendation of the chemist Henry Tizard, and was involved in similar work, such as "Project Sign".^[62] After less than a year, the directorate, named the "Flying Saucer Working Party" (FSWP), concluded that most observations were either cases of mistaken identity, optical illusions, psychological delusions, or hoaxes, and recommended that no further investigation on the phenomena should be undertaken.^[63] In 1952, the directorate informed Prime Minister Winston Churchill, after his inquiry about UFOs, that they had found no evidence of extraterrestrial spacecraft.^[62] The FSWP files were classified for fifty years and were released to the British public in 2001.^[62]

Project Magnet, Project Second Story (Canada, 1950–1954)

Project Magnet, led by senior radio engineer Wilbert B. Smith from the Department of Transport, had the goal of studying magnetic phenomena, specifically geomagnetism, as a potential propulsion method for vehicles.^{[64][65]} Smith believed UFOs were using this method to achieve flight.^[65] The final report of the project, however, contained no mention of geomagnetism.^[66] It discussed twenty-five UFO sightings reported during 1952, and concluded with the notion that "extraterrestrial space vehicles" are probable.^[66]

Along with the Smith group, a parallel committee dedicated solely to dealing with "flying saucer" reports was formed.^[67] This committee, called Project Second Story, was sponsored by the Defence Research Board, with its main purpose being to collect, catalog, and correlate data from UFO sighting reports.^[67] The committee appeared to have dissolved after five meetings, as the group deemed the collected material unsuitable for scientific analysis.^[68]

Project Blue Book (US, 1951–1969)

As a continuation of Project Sign and Project Grudge in 1951, the USAF launched Project Blue Book, led by Captain Edward J. Ruppelt. Under Ruppelt, the collection and investigation of UFO sightings became more systematic.^[69] The project issued a series of status reports, which were declassified in September 1960 and made available in 1968.^[70] Project Blue Book was terminated in December 1969, following the report of the Condon Committee. Until then, 12,618 incidents had been investigated, the grand majority of which explained by conventional means. 701 cases, around 6%, remained "unidentified".^[71] Officially, the USAF concluded from the project that the phenomena investigated were of no concern to national security, and that there was no evidence the sightings categorized as "unidentified" were caused by extraterrestrial aircraft.^[71]

Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14 (US, 1952–1954)

Ruppelt contracted a team of scientists from the Battelle Memorial Institute to evaluate 3200 early sightings gathered by Project Blue Book. They conducted analysis, primarily statistical, on the subject for almost two years. The study concluded that the more complete the data was and the better the report, the more likely it was that the report was classified as "unidentified".^[72]^[73] Those reports classified as "unidentified" numbered 21.5% of the total (33% of the highest quality reports) and required unanimous agreement among the four project scientists, whereas "identifieds" required agreement by only two of four analysts. A statistical analysis of six characteristics, such as speed and sighting duration, found statistically significant differences in at least four of the six categories between identifieds and unidentifieds. However, the report emphasized the subjectivity of the data, and stated that the conclusions drawn from the study were not based on facts, but on the subjective observations and estimations of the individual.^[74] Furthermore, the report summary and conclusion stated that "unknowns" were not likely something beyond the era's technology, and almost certainly not "flying saucers".^[69]



The main entrance to Battelle Memorial Institute in Columbus, Ohio

Robertson Panel (US, 1953)

Before the final Battelle report was published, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had developed an interest in UFOs as a national security issue, and set up a committee to examine existing UFO data.^[69] The panel, headed by mathematician and physicist Howard P. Robertson, met from January 14 to 17, 1953.^[8] It concluded unanimously that the UFO sightings posed no direct threat to national security, but did find that a continued emphasis on UFO reporting might threaten government functions by causing the channels of communication to clog with irrelevant reports and by inducing mass hysteria.^[8] Also, the panel worried that nations hostile to the US might use the UFO phenomena to disrupt air defenses.^[8] To meet these problems, the panel stated that a policy of public education on the lack of evidence behind UFOs was needed, to be done through the mass media and schools, among others.^[8] It also recommended monitoring private UFO groups for subversive activities.^[8]

The recommendations of the Roberson Panel were partly implemented through a series of special military regulations.^[75] The December 1953 Joint-Army-Navy-Air Force Publication 146 (JANAP 146) made publication of UFO sightings a crime under the Espionage Act.^[75] The Air Force Regulation 200-2 (AFR 200-2) revision of 1954 made all UFO sightings reported to the USAF classified.^[75] AFR 200-2 revision of February 1958 allowed the military to deliver to the FBI names of those who were "illegally or deceptively" bringing UFOs to public attention.^[75]

Condon Committee (US, 1966–1968)



Edward U. Condon

After the recommendations of the Robertson Panel, the USAF wanted to end its involvement in UFOs, and pass Project Blue Book to another agency.^[76] In October 1966, the USAF contracted the University of Colorado, under the leadership of physicist Edward U. Condon, for \$325,000 to conduct more scientific investigations of selected UFO sightings and to make recommendations about the project's future.^{[8][76]} The committee looked at ninety-one UFO sightings, of which 30% was unidentifiable.^[72] The report concluded that there was no "direct evidence" that UFOs were extraterrestrial spacecraft,^[72] that UFO research from the past twenty-one years had not contributed anything to scientific knowledge, and that further study was not justified.^[77] As a direct result of the Condon report, Project Blue Book was closed in

December 1969.^[72] Many ufologists, however, were not satisfied with the Condon report, and considered it a cover-up.^[8]

RAND Corporation paper (US, 1968)

The RAND Corporation produced a short internal document titled "UFOs: What to Do?", published in November 1968.^[78] The paper gave a historical summary of the UFO phenomenon, talked briefly about issues concerning extraterrestrial life and interstellar travel, presented a few case studies and discussed the phenomenological content of a UFO sighting, reviewed hypotheses, and concluded with a recommendation to organize a central UFO report-receiving agency and conducting more research on the phenomenon.^[78]

Project Identification (US, 1973–1980)

In 1973, a wave of UFO sightings in southeast Missouri prompted Harley D. Rutledge, physics professor at the University of Missouri, to conduct an extensive field investigation of the phenomenon.^[79] The findings were published in the book *Project Identification: the first scientific field study of UFO phenomena*.^[80] Although taking a specific interest in describing unidentified aerial phenomena, as opposed to identifying them, the book references the presumed intelligence of the sighted objects.^[81] Rutledge's study results were not published in any peer-reviewed journal or other scientific venue or format.^[79]

Studies by GEPAN, SERPA & GEIPAN (France, 1977–present)

In 1977, the French Space Agency CNES Director General set up a unit to record UFO sighting reports.^[82] The unit was initially known as *Groupe d'Etudes des Phénomènes Aérospatiaux Non identifiés* (GEPAN), changed in 1988 to *Service d'expertise de rentrée atmosphérique Phenom* (SERPA) and in 2005 to *Groupe d'études et d'informations sur les phénomènes aérospatiaux non identifiés* (GEIPAN).^[82]

GEIPAN found a mundane explanation for the vast majority of recorded cases, but in 2007, after 30 years of investigation, 1,600 cases, approximately 28% of total cases, remained unexplained "despite precise witness accounts and good-quality evidence recovered from the scene" and are categorized as "Type D".^[82] In April 2010, GEIPAN statistics stated that 23% of all cases were of Type D.^[83] However, Jean-Jacques Velasco, the head of SEPRA from 1983 to 2004, wrote a book in 2004 noting that 13.5% of the 5,800 cases studied by SEPRA were dismissed without any rational explanation, and stated that UFOs are extraterrestrial in origin.^{[84][85]}

United Nations (1977–1979)

Thanks to the lobbying of Eric Gairy, the Prime Minister of Grenada, the United Nations General Assembly addressed the UFO issue in the late 1970s.^[86] On July 14, 1978, a panel, with Gordon Cooper, J. Allen Hynek, and Jacques Vallée among its members, held a hearing to inform the UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim about the matter.^[87] As a consequence of this meeting, the UN adopted decisions A/DEC/32/424 and A/DEC/33/426, which called for the "establishment of an agency or a department of the United Nations for undertaking, co-ordinating and disseminating the results of research into unidentified flying objects and related phenomena".^{[88][89][90]}

Project Hessdalen / Project EMBLA (Norway, 1983–present / Italy 1999–2004)

Since 1981, in an area near Hessdalen in Norway, unidentified flying objects have been commonly observed. This so-called Hessdalen phenomenon has twice been the subject of scientific field studies: Project Hessdalen (1983–1985, 1995–) secured technical assistance from the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, the University of Oslo, and the University of Bergen, while Project EMBLA (1999–2004) was a team of Italian scientists led by Ph.D. Massimo Teodorani from the *Istituto di Radioastronomia di Bologna*.

Both studies confirmed the presence of the phenomenon and were able to record it with cameras and various technical equipment such as radar, laser, and infrared.^{[91][92]} The origin and nature of the lights remains unclear.^{[93][94]} Researchers from Project EMBLA speculated the possibility that atmospheric plasma had been the origin of the phenomenon.^[95]

Project Condign (UK, 1996–2000)

The British Ministry of Defence (MoD) published in 2006 the "Scientific & Technical Memorandum 55/2/00a" of a four-volume, 460-page report entitled *Unidentified Aerial Phenomena in the UK Air Defence Region*, based on a study by DI55 (a section of the Directorate of Scientific and Technical Intelligence of the Defence Intelligence Staff) codenamed Project Condign.^[96] It discusses the British UFO reports received between 1959 and 1997.

The report affirms that UFOs are an existing phenomenon,^[97] but points out that they present no threat to national defense.^[98] The report further states that there is no evidence that UFO sightings are caused by incursions of intelligent origin, or that any UFO consists of solid objects which might create a collision hazard.^[99] Although the study admits to being unable to explain all analyzed UFO sightings with certainty, it recommends that section DI55 ceases monitoring UFO reports, as they do not provide information useful for Defence Intelligence.^[100] The report concludes that a small percentage of sightings that can not be easily explained are caused by atmospheric plasma phenomenon similar to ball lightning; Magnetic and other energy fields produced by these "buoyant plasma formations" are responsible for the appearance of so-called "Black Triangles" as well as having hallucinogenic effects on the human mind, inducing experiences of Close Encounters.

Sturrock Panel Report (US, 1997)

From Sept. 29 to Oct. 4, 1997 a workshop examining selected UFO incidents took place in Tarrytown, New York. The meeting was initiated by Peter A. Sturrock, who had reviewed the Condon report and found it dissatisfying.^[101] The international review panel consisted of nine physical scientists, who responded to eight investigators of UFO reports, who were asked to present their strongest data.^[102] The final report of the workshop was published under the title "Physical Evidence Related to UFO Reports" in the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* in 1998.^[103] The study concluded that the studied cases presented no unequivocal evidence for the presence of unknown physical phenomena or for extraterrestrial intelligence,^[104] but argued that a continued study of UFO cases might be scientifically valuable.^[105]

COMETA Report (France, 1999)

COMETA (*Comité d'Études Approfondies*, "Committee for in-depth studies") is a private French group, which is mainly composed of high-ranking individuals from the French Ministry of Defence. In 1999 the group published a ninety-page report entitled "*Les OVNI et la défense: à quoi doit-on se préparer?*" ("UFOs and Defense: What Should We Prepare For?").^[106] The report analyzed various UFO cases and concluded that UFOs are real, complex flying objects, and that the extraterrestrial hypothesis has a high probability of being the correct explanation for the UFO phenomenon.^[107] The study recommended that the French government should adjust to the reality of the phenomenon and conduct further research.^[108] Skeptic Claude Maugé criticized COMETA for research incompetency, and claimed that the report tried to present itself as an official French document, when in fact it was published by a private group.^[109]

"Disclosure Project" Press Conference (US, 2001)



Steven M. Greer

On May 9, 2001, twenty government workers from military and civilian organizations spoke about their experiences regarding UFOs and UFO confidentiality at the National Press Club in Washington D.C.^[110] The press conference was initiated by Steven M. Greer, founder of the Disclosure Project, which has the goal of disclosing alleged government UFO secrecy.^[111] The purpose of the press conference was to build public pressure through the media to obtain a hearing before the United States Congress on the issue.^[112] Although major American media outlets reported on the conference,^[113] the interest quickly died down, and no hearing came forth.

Fife Symington Press Conference (US, 2007)

On November 12, 2007, a press conference, moderated by former Governor of Arizona Fife Symington, was held at the National Press Club in Washington D.C.^[114] Nineteen former pilots and military and civilian officials spoke about their experiences with UFOs, demanding that the U.S. government engage in a new investigation of the phenomenon.^[115]

UFO organizations

United States

In the US, groups and affiliates interested in UFO investigation number in the hundreds, of which a few have achieved prominence based on their longevity, size, and researcher involvement with scientific credentials.^[116] The first significant UFO interest group in the US was the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO), formed in 1952 by Coral and James Lorenzen.^[116] The organization closed down in 1988.^[116] The National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), which formed in 1957 and shut down in the 1970s,^[116] whose Board of Directors included former Director of Central Intelligence and first head of the Central Intelligence Agency, VADM Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, was, at one time, the largest UFO organization in the country, with numerous chapters.^[116] In 1957, brothers W. H. and J. A. Spaulding founded the Ground Saucer Watch, which later became famous when, in 1977, the group filed a suit under the Freedom of Information Act against the CIA.^[116]

The two major UFO investigative groups active today are the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), founded in 1969, and the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS), founded in 1973 by J. Allen Hynek.^[116] MUFON grew as the key members of NICAP joined the organization in the 1970s.^[116] CUFOS has tried to limit its membership to

established researchers, but has found little academic acceptance.^[116]

National UFO Reporting Center takes UFO reports, and has been in operation since 1974.^[117]

United Kingdom

The British UFO Research Association (BUFORA) is the oldest of the active British UFO organizations.^[118] It traces its roots to the London UFO Research Association, founded in 1959, which merged with the British UFO Association (BUFOA) to form BUFORA in 1964.^[118]

Australia

The Australian Flying Saucer Bureau (AFSB) and the Australian Flying Saucer Research Society (AFSRS) were the earliest UFO groups established in Australia, with both being founded in the early 1950s.^[119] The Australian Centre for UFO Studies (ACUFOS) was established in 1974 with links to the American CUFOs.^[120] Other currently active Australian UFO groups include the Victorian UFO Research Society (VUFORS),^[119] the Australian UFO Research Network (AUFORN),^[121] and UFO Research Queensland (UFORQ).^[122]

Switzerland

The *Freie Interessengemeinschaft für Grenz- und Geisteswissenschaften und Ufologiestudien* (Free Community of Interests for the Border and Spiritual Sciences and Ufological Studies) (FIGU) is a non-profit, tax-paying organization established under the name mentioned. This organization was established by Eduard Albert Meier (Billy Meier) in 1996 with its headquarters based in Schmidrüti, Switzerland.

www.figu.org

Skeptic organizations

The Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI), although not a UFO organization, has investigated various UFO cases and has given a skeptical review of the phenomena in its publications, often in the *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine.^[123] Founded as the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) in 1976 by professor of philosophy Paul Kurtz, the committee is known for its member scientists and skeptics, such as Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov, Philip J. Klass, Ray Hyman, James Randi, and Martin Gardner.^[124] The Skeptics Society, founded by science historian Michael Shermer in 1992, has also addressed the UFO issue in its magazine *Skeptic*.^[125]

World UFO Day

World UFO Day is a day for people to gather together and watch the skies for unidentified flying objects.^{[126][127]} The goal of the July 2 celebration is to raise awareness of the Roswell findings, and to gain support in forcing governments to "tell the truth about earthly visits from outer space aliens".^[128] This day is celebrated in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, China, Thailand, Belgium, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Netherlands, South Africa, Taiwan, Turkey, the Czech Republic, Australia, Spain, Korea, Brazil, Italy, France, Nigeria, Finland, Austria and Poland.^[129]

See also

- Ancient astronauts

- [Fringe science](#)
- [List of topics characterized as pseudoscience](#)
- [List of Ufologists](#)
- [SETI](#)
- [UFOs in fiction](#)

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Further reading

Academic books about ufology as a sociological and historical phenomenon

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External links

- Ufology News (<http://ufology-news.com/>)
- Center for UFO Studies (<http://www.cufos.org/>)
- Mutual UFO Network (<http://www.mufon.com/>)

- [National UFO Reporting Center \(http://www.nuforc.org/\)](http://www.nuforc.org/)
 - [Groupe d'Études et d'Informations sur les Phénomènes Aérospatiaux Non-identifiés \(http://www.cnes-geipan.fr/\)](http://www.cnes-geipan.fr/)
 - [British UFO Research Association \(http://www.bufora.org.uk/\)](http://www.bufora.org.uk/)
 - [Committee for Skeptical Inquiry UFO resources \(http://www.csicop.org/resources#ufos\)](http://www.csicop.org/resources#ufos)
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Alien abduction

The terms **alien abduction** or **abduction phenomenon** describe "subjectively real memories of being taken secretly against one's will by apparently nonhuman entities and subjected to complex physical and psychological procedures".^[1] People claiming to have been abducted are usually called "abductees"^[2] or "experiencers". Typical claims involve being subjected to forced medical examinations that emphasize abductee reproductive systems.^[3] Abductees sometimes claim to have been warned against environmental abuse and the dangers of nuclear weapons.^[4]

Due to a lack of objective physical evidence, most scientists and mental health professionals dismiss the phenomenon as "deception, suggestibility (fantasy-proneness, hypnotizability, false memory syndrome), personality, sleep paralysis, psychopathology, psychodynamics [and] environmental factors".^[5] Skeptic Robert Sheaffer sees similarity between the aliens depicted in science fiction films, in particular, *Invaders From Mars*, and some of those reported to have actually abducted people.^[6]

The first alleged alien abduction claim to be widely publicized was the Betty and Barney Hill abduction in 1961.^[7] Reports of the abduction phenomenon have been made around the world, but are most common in English speaking countries, especially the United States. The contents of the abduction narrative often seem to vary with the home culture of the alleged abductee.^[6]

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Overview

Mainstream scientists reject claims that the phenomenon literally occurs as reported. However, there is little doubt that many apparently stable persons who report alien abductions believe their experiences were real. As reported in the *Harvard University Gazette* in 1992, Dr. John E. Mack reports that of the 60 cases of claimed abductees he had worked on, that after a battery of psychological tests, "no psychiatric or psychosocial explanation for these reports is evident. These people are not mentally ill. He has spent countless therapeutic hours with these individuals only to find that what struck him was the 'ordinariness' of the population, including a restaurant owner, several secretaries, a prison guard, college students, a university administrator, and several homemakers ... "The majority of abductees do not appear to be deluded, confabulating, lying, self-dramatizing, or suffering from a clear mental illness," he maintained.^[9] "While psychopathology is indicated in some isolated alien abduction cases," Stuart Appelle et al. confirmed, "assessment by both clinical examination and standardized tests has shown that, as a group, abduction experients are not different from the general population in term of psychopathology prevalence."^[10] Other experts who have argued that abductees' mental health is no better or worse than average include psychologists John Wilson and Rima Laibow, and psychotherapist David Gotlib.^[11]

Some abduction reports are quite detailed. An entire subculture has developed around the subject, with support groups and a detailed mythos explaining the reasons for abductions: The various aliens (Greys, Reptilians, "Nordics" and so on) are said to have specific roles, origins, and motivations. Abduction claimants do not always attempt to explain the phenomenon, but some take independent research interest in it themselves and explain the lack of greater awareness of alien abduction as the result of either extraterrestrial or governmental interest in cover-up. Mack has cited more mundane reasons for the lack of general awareness concerning the data: "The most intense demand for alternative explanations tends to come from those who are either unfamiliar with the rich complexity of the abduction phenomenon, or from those who are so wedded to a worldview" that they find the phenomenon *prima facie* unacceptable.^[12]

History

Paleo-abductions

While "alien abduction" did not achieve widespread attention until the 1960s, there were many similar stories circulating decades earlier. These early abduction-like accounts have been dubbed "paleo-abductions" by UFO researcher Jerome Clark.^[13]

- In the November 27, 1896 edition of the Stockton, California *Daily Mail*, Colonel H. G. Shaw claimed he and a

friend were harassed by three tall, slender humanoids whose bodies were covered with a fine, downy hair who tried to kidnap the pair.^[13]

- In the October 1953 issue of *Man to Man Magazine* an article by Leroy Thorpe titled "Are the Flying Saucers Kidnapping Humans?" asks the question "Are an unlucky few of us, and perhaps not so few at that, being captured with the same ease as we would net butterflies, perhaps for zoological specimens, perhaps for vivisection or some other horrible death designed to reveal to our interplanetary invaders what makes us tick?" ^[14]
- Rogerson writes that the 1955 publication of Harold T. Wilkins's *Flying Saucers Uncensored* declared that Karl Hunrath and Wilbur Wilkinson, who had claimed they were contacted by aliens, had disappeared under mysterious circumstances; Wilkins reported speculation that the duo were the victims of "alleged abduction by flying saucers".^[15]

Two landmark cases

An early alien abduction claim occurred in the mid-1950s with the Antonio Vilas Boas case, which did not receive much attention until several years later.

Widespread publicity was generated by the Betty and Barney Hill abduction case of 1961, culminating in a made-for-television film broadcast in 1975 (starring James Earl Jones and Estelle Parsons) dramatizing the events. The Hill incident was probably the prototypical abduction case and was perhaps the first in which the claimant described beings that later became widely known as the Greys and in which the beings were said to explicitly identify an extraterrestrial origin.

Though these two cases are sometimes viewed as the earliest abductions, skeptic Peter Rogerson^[15] notes they were only the first "canonical" abduction cases, establishing a template that later abductees and researchers would refine but rarely deviate from. Additionally, Rogerson notes purported abductions were cited contemporaneously at least as early as 1954, and that "the growth of the abduction stories is a far more tangled affair than the 'entirely unprejudiced' official history would have us believe." (The phrase "entirely unprejudiced" appeared in folklorist Thomas E. Bullard's study of alien abduction; he argued that alien abductions as reported in the 1970s and 1980s had little precedent in folklore or fiction.)

Later developments

R. Leo Sprinkle, a University of Wyoming psychologist, became interested in the abduction phenomenon in the 1960s. For some years, he was probably the only academic figure devoting any time to studying or researching abduction accounts. Sprinkle became convinced of the phenomenon's actuality, and was perhaps the first to suggest a link between abductions and cattle mutilation. Eventually Sprinkle came to believe that he had been abducted by aliens in his youth; he was forced from his job in 1989.^[16]

Budd Hopkins had been interested in UFOs for some years. In the 1970s he became interested in abduction reports, and began using hypnosis to extract more details of dimly remembered events. Hopkins soon became a figurehead of the growing abductee subculture.^[17]

The 1980s brought a major degree of mainstream attention to the subject. Works by Hopkins, novelist Whitley Strieber, historian David M. Jacobs and psychiatrist John E. Mack presented alien abduction as a genuine phenomenon.^[17] Also of note in the 1980s was the publication of folklorist Dr. Thomas E. Bullard's comparative analysis of nearly 300 alleged abductees.

CUFOS definition of an abductee^[8]

A person must be taken:

- Against his or her will
- From terrestrial surroundings
- By non-human beings.

These beings must take the person to:

- An enclosed place
- Not terrestrial in appearance
- Assumed or known to be an alien spacecraft by the witness.

In this place, the person must either:

- Be subjected to an examination,
- Engage in communication (verbal or telepathic),
- Or both.

These experiences may be remembered:

- Consciously
- Or through methods of focused concentration, such as hypnosis.

With Hopkins, Jacobs and Mack, accounts of alien abduction became a prominent aspect of ufology. There had been earlier abduction reports (the Hills being the best known), but they were believed to be few and far between, and saw rather little attention from ufology (and even less attention from mainstream professionals or academics). Jacobs and Hopkins argued that alien abduction was far more common than earlier suspected; they estimate that tens of thousands (or more) North Americans had been taken by unexplained beings.^[17]

Furthermore, Jacobs and Hopkins argued that there was an elaborate process underway in which aliens were attempting to create human–alien hybrids, the most advanced stage of which in the "human hybridization program" are known as hubrids^[18], though the motives for this effort were unknown. There had been anecdotal reports of phantom pregnancy related to UFO encounters at least as early as the 1960s, but Budd Hopkins and especially David M. Jacobs were instrumental in popularizing the idea of widespread, systematic interbreeding efforts on the part of the alien intruders.

The descriptions of alien encounters as researched and presented by Hopkins, Jacobs and Mack were similar, with slight differences in each researcher's emphasis; the process of selective citation of abductee interviews that supported these variations was sometimes criticized – though abductees who presented their own accounts directly, such as Whitley Strieber, fared no better.

The involvement of Jacobs and Mack marked something of a sea change in the abduction studies. Their efforts were controversial (both men saw some degree of damage to their professional reputations), but to other observers, Jacobs and Mack brought a degree of respectability to the subject.

John E. Mack

Matheson writes that "if Jacobs's credentials were impressive," then those of Harvard psychiatrist John E. Mack might seem "impeccable" in comparison.^[19] Mack was a well known, highly esteemed psychiatrist, author of over 150 scientific articles and winner of the Pulitzer Prize for his biography of T. E. Lawrence. Mack became interested in the phenomenon in the late 1980s, interviewing over 800 people, and eventually writing two books on the subject.

Mack devoted a substantial amount of time to investigating such cases and eventually concluded that the only phenomenon in psychiatry that adequately explained the patients' symptoms in several of the most compelling cases was posttraumatic stress disorder.^[20] As he noted at the time, this would imply that the patient genuinely believed that the remembered frightening incident had really occurred – the position Mack came to endorse.^[21]

In June 1992, Mack and the physicist David E. Pritchard organized a five-day conference at MIT to discuss and debate the abduction phenomenon.^[22] The conference attracted a wide range of professionals, representing a variety of perspectives. As their thanks for their efforts to focus a modest level of serious scientific attention on the perplexing "abduction" phenomenon by organizing this conference, Mack and Jacobs were awarded an Ig Nobel Prize in 1993.

Writer C. D. B. Bryan attended the conference, initially intending to gather information for a short humorous article for The New Yorker. While attending the conference, however, Bryan's view of the subject changed, and he wrote a serious, open-minded book on the phenomenon, additionally interviewing many abductees, skeptics, and proponents.

Abductees

The precise number of alleged abductees is uncertain. One of the earliest studies of abductions found 1,700 claimants, while contested surveys argued that 5–6 percent of the general population might have been abducted.^[5]

Demographics

In a study investigating the motivations of the alleged abductors, Jenny Randles found that in each of the 4 cases out of 50 total where the experiencer was over 40 years of age, they were rejected by the aliens for "what they (the experiencers) usually inferred to be a medical reason."^[23] Randles concludes "[T]he abduction is essentially a young person's experience."^[23] Given the reproductive focus of the alleged abductions it is not surprising that one man reported being rejected because he had undergone a vasectomy.^[24] It could also be partially because people over the age of 40 are less likely to have "hormonic" or reproductive activity going on.

Although abduction and other UFO-related reports are usually made by adults, sometimes young children report similar experiences.^[25] These child-reports often feature very specific details in common with reports of abduction made by adults, including the circumstances, narrative, entities and aftermaths of the alleged occurrences.^[25] Often these young abductees have family members who have reported having abduction experiences.^[25] Family involvement in the military, or a residence near a military base is also common among child abduction claimants.^[25]

Mental health

As a category, some studies show that abductees have psychological characteristics that render their testimony suspect, while others show that "as a group, abduction experiencers are not different from the general population in term of psychopathology prevalence".^{[6][10]} Dr. Elizabeth Slater conducted a blind study of nine abduction claimants and found them to be prone to "mildly paranoid thinking," nightmares and having a weak sexual identity,^[6] while Dr. Richard McNally of Harvard Medical School concluded in a similar study of 10 abductees that "none of them was suffering from any sort of psychiatric illness."^[26]

Paranormal

Alleged abductees are seen by many pro-abduction researchers to have a higher incidence of non-abduction related paranormal events and abilities.^[27] Following an abduction experience, these paranormal abilities and occurrences sometimes seem to become more pronounced.^[27] According to investigator Benton Jamison, abduction experiencers who report UFO sightings that should have been, but are not, reported by independent corroborating witnesses often seem to "be 'psychic personalities' in the sense of Jan Ehrenwald."^[27] Psychic Medium Danielle Egnew recounted multiple abduction experiences in her 2012 book *True Tales of the Truly Weird*, greatly detailing communication, technology and abduction methods of more than one alien race.^[28]

The abduction narrative

Although different cases vary in detail (sometimes significantly), some UFO researchers, such as folklorist Thomas E. Bullard^[29] argue that there is a broad, fairly consistent sequence and description of events that make up the typical "close encounter of the fourth kind" (a popular but unofficial designation building on Dr. J. Allen Hynek's classifications). Though the features outlined below are often reported, there is some disagreement as to exactly how often they actually occur.

Bullard argues most abduction accounts feature the following events. They generally follow the sequence noted below, though not all abductions feature all the events:

1. **Capture.** The abductee is somehow rendered incapable of resisting, and taken from terrestrial surroundings to an apparent alien spacecraft.
2. **Examination and Procedures.** Invasive physiological and psychological procedures, and on occasion simulated behavioral situations, training & testing, or sexual liaisons.

3. **Conference.** The abductors communicate with the abductee or direct them to interact with specific individuals for some purpose, typically telepathically but sometimes using the abductee's native language.
4. **Tour.** The abductees are given a tour of their captors' vessel, though this is disputed by some researchers who consider this definition a confabulation of intent when just apparently being taken around to multiple places inside the ship.
5. **Loss of Time.** Abductees often rapidly forget the majority of their experience, either as a result of fear, medical intervention, or both.
6. **Return.** The abductees are returned to earth, occasionally in a different location from where they were allegedly taken or with new injuries or disheveled clothing.
7. **Theophany.** Coinciding with their immediate return, abductees may have a profound sense of love, a "high" similar to those induced by certain drugs, or a "mystical experience", accompanied by a feeling of oneness with God, the universe, or their abductors. Whether this is the result of a metaphysical change, Stockholm syndrome, or prior medical tampering is often not scrutinized by the abductees at the time.
8. **Aftermath.** The abductee must cope with the psychological, physical, and social effects of the experience.

When describing the "abduction scenario", David M. Jacobs says:

The entire abduction event is precisely orchestrated. All the procedures are predetermined. There is no standing around and deciding what to do next. The beings are task-oriented and there is no indication whatsoever that we have been able to find of any aspect of their lives outside of performing the abduction procedures.^[30]

Capture

Abduction claimants report unusual feelings preceding the onset of an abduction experience.^[31] These feelings manifest as a compulsive desire to be at a certain place at a certain time or as expectations that something "familiar yet unknown," will soon occur.^[31] Abductees also report feeling severe, undirected anxiety at this point even though nothing unusual has actually occurred yet.^[31] This period of foreboding can last for up to several days before the abduction actually takes place or be completely absent.^[31]

Eventually, the experiencer will undergo an apparent "shift" into an altered state of consciousness.^[31] British abduction researchers have called this change in consciousness "the Oz Factor." External sounds cease to have any significance to the experiencer and fall out of perception.^[31] They report feeling introspective and unusually calm.^[31] This stage marks a transition from normal activity to a state of "limited self-willed mobility."^[31] As consciousness shifts one or more lights are alleged to appear, occasionally accompanied by a strange mist.^[31] The source and nature of the lights differ by report; sometimes the light emanates from a source outside the house (presumably the abductors' UFO), sometimes the lights are in the bedroom with the experiencer and transform into alien figures.^[31]

As the alleged abduction proceeds, claimants say they will walk or be levitated into an alien craft, in the latter case often through solid objects such as walls, ceilings or a closed window.^[31] Alternatively, they may experience rising through a tunnel or along a beam of light, with or without the abductors accompanying them, into the awaiting craft.^[31]

Examination

The examination phase of the so-called "abduction narrative" is characterized by the performance of medical procedures and examinations by apparently alien beings against or irrespective of the will of the experiencer. Such procedures often focus on sex and reproductive biology. However, the literature holds reports of a wide variety of procedures allegedly performed by the beings. The entity that appears to be in charge of the operation is often taller than the others involved, and is sometimes described as appearing to be of a different species.^{[3][32]}

Miller notes different areas of emphasis between human medicine and what is reported as being practiced by the abductors.^[3] This could result from a difference in the purpose of the examination—routine diagnosis and/or treatment versus scientific examination of an unfamiliar species, or it could be due to a different level of technology that renders certain kinds of manual procedures unnecessary. The abductors' areas of interest appear to be the cranium, nervous system, skin, reproductive system, and to a lesser degree, the joints.^[3] Systems given less attention than a human doctor would, or omitted entirely include cardiovascular system, the respiratory system below the pharynx and the lymphatic system.^[3] The abductors also appear to ignore the upper region of the abdomen in favor of the lower one.^[3] The abductors do not appear to wear gloves during the "examination."^[3] Other constants of terrestrial medicine like pills and tablets are missing from abduction narratives although sometimes abductees are asked to drink liquids.^[3] Injections also seem to be rare and IVs are almost completely absent.^[3] Dr. Miller says he's never heard an abductee claim to have a tongue depressor used on them.^[3]

Subsequent abduction procedures

After the so-called medical exam, the alleged abductees often report other procedures being performed with the entities.^[30] Common among these post-examination procedures are what abduction researchers refer to as imaging, envisioning, staging, and testing.^[30]

"Imaging" procedures consist of an abductee being made to view screens displaying images and scenes that appear to be specially chosen with the intent to provoke certain emotional responses in the abductee.^[30] "Envisioning" is a similar procedure, with the primary difference being that the images being viewed, rather than being on a screen, actually seem to be projected into the experiencer's mind.^[30] "Staging" procedures have the abductee playing a more active role, according to reports containing this element.^[30] It shares vivid hallucination-like mental visualization with the envisioning procedures, but during staging the abductee interacts with the illusionary scenario like a role player or an actor.^[30]

"Testing" marks something of a departure from the above procedures in that it lacks the emotional analysis feature.^[30] During testing the experiencer is placed in front of a complicated electronic device and is instructed to operate it.^[30] The experiencer is often confused, saying that they do not know how to operate it.^[30] However, when they actually set about performing the task, the abductee will find that they do, in fact, know how to operate the machine.^[30]

Child presentation

Abductees of all ages and genders sometimes report being subjected to a "child presentation."^[30] As its name implies, the child presentation involves the abduction claimant being shown a "child."^[30] Often the children appear to be neither human, nor the same species as the abductors.^[30] Instead, the child will almost always share characteristics of *both* species.^[30] These children are labeled by experiencers as hybrids between humans and their abductors, usually Greys.

Unlike Budd Hopkins and David Jacobs, folklorist Thomas E. Bullard could not identify a child presentation phase in the abduction narrative, even after undertaking a study of 300 abduction reports.^[24] Bullard says that the child presentation "seems to be an innovation in the story"^[24] and that "no clear antecedents" to descriptions of the child presentation phase exists before its popularization by Hopkins and Jacobs.^[24]

Less common elements

Bullard also studied the 300 reports of alien abduction in an attempt to observe the less prominent aspects of the claims.^[4] He notes the emergence of four general categories of events that recur regularly, although not as

frequently as stereotypical happenings like the medical examination. These four types of events are:^[4]

1. The conference
2. The tour
3. The journey
4. Theophany

Chronologically within abduction reports these rarer episodes tend to happen in the order listed, between the medical examination and the return.^[4]

After allegedly displaying cold callous disregard towards the abduction experiencers, sometimes the entities will change drastically in behavior once the initial medical exam is completed.^[4] They become more relaxed and hospitable towards their captive and lead him or her away from the site of the examination.^[4] The entities then hold a **conference** with the experiencer, wherein they discuss things relevant to the abduction phenomenon.^[4] Bullard notes five general categories of discussion that occur during the conference "phase" of reported abduction narratives: An interrogation session, explanatory segment, task assignment, warnings, and prophecies.^[4]

Tours of the abductors' craft are a rare but recurring feature of the abduction narrative.^[4] The tour seems to be given by the alleged abductors as a courtesy in response to the harshness and physical rigors of the forced medical examination.^[4] Sometimes the abductee report traveling on a "**journey**" to orbit around Earth or to what appear to be other planets.^[4] Some abductees find that the experience is terrifying, particularly if the aliens are of a more fearsome species, or if the abductee was subjected to extensive probing and medical testing.

Return

Eventually the abductors will return the abductees, usually to exactly the same location and circumstances they were in before being taken.^[33] Usually, explicit memories of the abduction experience will not be present, and the abductee will only realize they have experienced "missing time" upon checking a timepiece.^[33]

Sometimes the alleged abductors appear to make mistakes when returning their captives.^[33] Famed UFO researcher Budd Hopkins has joked about "the cosmic application of Murphy's Law" in response to this observation.^[33] Hopkins has estimated that these "errors" accompany 4–5 percent of abduction reports.^[33] One type of common apparent mistake made by the abductors is failing to return the experiencer to the same spot that they were taken from initially.^[33] This can be as simple as a different room in the same house, or abductees can even find themselves outside and all the doors of the house are locked from the inside.^[33] Another common (and amusing) error is putting the abductee's clothes (e.g. pajamas) on backwards.

Realization event

Physician and abduction researcher John G. Miller sees significance in the reason a person would come to see themselves as being a victim of the abduction phenomenon.^[34] He terms the insight or development leading to this shift in identity from non-abductee to abductee the "realization event."^[34] The realization event is often a single, memorable experience, but Miller reports that not all abductees experience it as a distinct episode.^[34] Either way, the realization event can be thought of as the "clinical horizon" of the abduction experience.^[34]

Trauma and recovery

Most people alleging alien abductions report invasive examinations of their bodies^[35] and some ascribe psychological trauma to their experiences.^[36] "Post abduction syndrome" is a term used by abductees to describe the effects of abduction, though it is not recognized by any professional treatment organizations.^[36] People who

have a false memory which makes them believe that they have been abducted by aliens develop symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder. People who believe they have been abducted by aliens usually have previous New Age beliefs, a vivid fantasy life, and suffer from sleep paralysis, according to a 2003 study by Harvard University.^[37]

Support groups

Support groups for people who believed they were abducted began appearing in the mid-1980s. These groups appear throughout the United States, Canada and Australia.^[38]

The role of hypnosis

Many alien abductees recall much of their abduction(s) through hypnosis.^[39] Due to the extensive use of hypnosis and other manipulative methods, skeptics explain the abduction narratives as false memories and suggestions.^[40]

Argument against the use of hypnosis

Alleged abductees seek out hypnotherapists to try to resolve issues such as missing time or unexplained physical symptoms such as muscle pain or headaches. This usually involves two phases, an information gathering stage, in which the hypnotherapist asks about unexplained illnesses or unusual phenomena during the patients lives (caused by or distortions of the alleged abduction), followed by hypnosis and guided imagery to facilitate recall. The information gathering enhances the likelihood that the events discussed will be incorporated into later abduction "memories".^[41] Seven steps are hypothesized to lead to the development of false memories:^[40]

1. A person is predisposed to accept the idea that certain puzzling or inexplicable experiences might be telltale signs of UFO abduction.
2. The person seeks out a therapist, whom he or she views as an authority and who is, at the very least, receptive to this explanation and has some prior familiarity with UFO abduction reports.
3. Alternatively, the therapist frames the puzzling experiences in terms of an abduction narrative.
4. Alternative explanations of the experiences are not explored.
5. There is increasing commitment to the abduction explanation and increasing anxiety reduction associated with ambiguity reduction.
6. The therapist legitimates or ratifies the abductee's experience, which constitutes additional positive reinforcement.
7. The client adopts the role of the "victim" or abductee, which becomes integrated into the psychotherapy and the client's view of self.

Argument for the use of hypnosis

Harvard psychiatrist John E. Mack counters this argument, noting "It might be useful to restate that a large proportion of the material relating to abductions is recalled without the use of an altered state of consciousness, and that many abduction reporters appear to relive powerful experiences after only the most minimal relaxation exercise, hardly justifying the word *hypnosis* at all. The relaxation exercise is useful to relieve the experiencer's need to attend to the social demands and other stimuli of face-to-face conversation, and to relieve the energies involved in repressing memories and emotion."^[42]

Perspectives

There have been a variety of explanations offered for abduction phenomena, ranging from sharply skeptical appraisals, to uncritical acceptance of all abductee claims, to the demonological, to everything in between.

Some have elected not to try explaining things, instead noting similarities to other phenomena, or simply documenting the development of the alien abduction phenomenon.

Others are intrigued by the entire phenomenon, but hesitate in making any definitive conclusions. The late Harvard psychiatrist John E. Mack concluded, "The furthest you can go at this point is to say *there's an authentic mystery here*. And that is, I think, as far as anyone *ought* to go." (emphasis as in original)^[43] Mack was unconvinced by piecemeal counterclaims, however, and countered that skeptical explanations naturally need to "take into account the entire range of phenomena associated with abduction experiences," up to and including "missing time," directly contemporaneous UFO sightings, and the occurrence in small children.^[12]

Putting aside the question of whether abduction reports are literally and objectively "real", literature professor Terry Matheson argues that their popularity and their intriguing appeal are easily understood. Tales of abduction "are intrinsically absorbing; it is hard to imagine a more vivid description of human powerlessness." After experiencing the frisson of delightful terror one may feel from reading ghost stories or watching horror movies, Matheson notes that people "can return to the safe world of their homes, secure in the knowledge that the phenomenon in question cannot follow. But as the abduction myth has stated almost from the outset, there is no avoiding alien abductors."^[44]

Matheson writes that when compared to the earlier contactee reports, abduction accounts are distinguished by their "relative sophistication and subtlety, which enabled them to enjoy an immediately more favorable reception from the public."

Some writers^{[45][46]} have said abduction experiences bear similarities to pre-20th century accounts of demonic manifestations, noting as many as a dozen similarities.^[47] One notable example is the Orthodox monk Fr. Seraphim Rose, who devotes a whole chapter in his book *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*^[48] to the phenomena of UFOs and abductions, which, he concludes, are manifestations of the demonic.^[49]

Testimonials

Abduction researcher Brian Thompson claims that a nurse acquaintance of his reported that during 1957 in Cincinnati she encountered a 3-foot-tall (0.91 m) praying mantis-like entity two days after a V-shaped UFO sighting.^[32] This mantis-like creature is reminiscent of the insectoid-type entity reported in some abduction accounts.^[32] He related this report to fellow researcher Leonard Stringfield.^[32] Stringfield told him of two cases he had in his files where separate witnesses reported identical circumstances in the same place and year.^[32]

While some corroborated accounts seem to support the literal reality of the abduction experience, others seem to support a psychological explanation for the phenomenon's origins. Jenny Randles and Keith Basterfield both noted at the 1992 MIT alien abduction conference that of the five cases they knew of where an abduction researcher was present at the onset of an abduction experience, the experiencer "didn't physically go anywhere."^[50]

Brazilian researcher Gilda Moura reported on a similar case, the Sueli case, from her home country. When psychologist and UFO researcher Don Donderi said that these cases were "evidence of psychological processes" that did not "have anything to do with a physical alien abduction," Moura replied "If the Sueli case is not an abduction, I don't know what is an abduction any more."^[50] Gilda Moura noted that in the Brazilian Sueli case during the abduction UFOs were observed.^[50] Later, she claims the experiencer had eye burns, saw lights and there seemed to be residual poltergeist activity.^[50]

Attempts at confirmation

It has been argued that if actual "flesh and blood" aliens are abducting humans, there should be some hard

evidence that this is occurring.^[6] Proponents of the physical reality of the abduction experience have suggested ways that could conceivably confirm abduction reports.

One procedure reported occurring during the alleged exam phase of the experience is the insertion of a long needle-like contraption into a woman's navel.^[3] Some have speculated that this could be a form of laparoscopy.^[3] If this is true, after the abduction there should be free gas in the female's abdomen, which could be seen on an x-ray.^[3] The presence of free gas would be extremely abnormal, and would help substantiate the claim of some sort of procedure being done to her.^[3]

Notable abduction claims

- 1956: Elizabeth Klarer (South Africa)
- 1957: Antonio Vilas Boas (Brazil)
- 1961: Betty and Barney Hill (USA)^[7]
- 1973: Pascagoula Abduction (USA)
- 1975: Travis Walton (USA)
- 1978: Valentich disappearance (Australia)
- 1979: Robert Taylor incident (Scotland)
- 1970s–1980s: Whitley Strieber (USA)
- 1994: Meng Zhaoguo incident (China)

Notable figures

- Danielle Egnew
- Raymond E. Fowler
- Steven M. Greer
- Budd Hopkins
- Linda Moulton Howe
- David Icke
- David M. Jacobs
- John E. Mack
- Riley Martin
- Whitley Strieber

See also

- Alien abduction claimants
- Alien abduction entities
- Alien abduction insurance
- Alien language
- Anal probing
- Grey alien
- Hypnotherapy
- List of reported UFO sightings
- Recovered-memory therapy
- Sleep paralysis
- Temporal lobe epilepsy
- Witchcraft – similarities include the involvement of sexual contact with non-human creatures in historical accusations of witchcraft.^[6]

Footnotes

- ↑ Appelle, Stuart. "The Abduction Experience: A Critical Evaluation of Theory and Evidence". *Journal of UFO Studies*, n.s. 6, 1995/96, pp. 29–78
- ↑ "Alien abduction – Define Alien abduction at Dictionary.com" (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/alien+abduction). *Dictionary.com*.
- ↑ Miller, John G. "Medical Procedural Differences: Alien Versus Human." In: Pritchard, Andrea & Pritchard, David E. & Mack, John E. & Kasey, Pam & Yapp, Claudia. *Alien Discussions: Proceedings of the Abduction Study Conference*. Cambridge: North Cambridge Press, 1994. pp. 59–64.
- ↑ Bullard, Thomas E. "The Rarer Abduction Episodes." In: Pritchard, Andrea & Pritchard, David E. & Mack, John E. & Kasey, Pam & Yapp, Claudia. *Alien Discussions: Proceedings of the Abduction Study Conference*. Cambridge: North Cambridge Press, 1994. Pp. 72–74.
- ↑ Appelle, 1996

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7. "Testament for Believers" (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,828455,00.html>). *Time*. November 18, 1966. Retrieved 2008-07-30. "On the night of Sept. 19, 1961, Barney Hill and his wife Betty were driving home to Portsmouth, N.H., after a holiday in Montreal. A brilliant waxing moon sailed through a cloudless and star-fretted sky. As the Hills watched, first idly and then in terrified astonishment, one of the stars detached itself Tom [sic] the firmament and came down to earth—so near that the Hills could see it was no star."
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11. Huyghe, Patrick, "The Dark Side" (<http://www.anomalist.com/features/darkside.html>) URL accessed Jan 23, 2006(1993)
12. Mack, 1995. p. 431
13. * Colvin, T. "UFOs And Fairies/Legends/Supernatural – Pt. II" (<http://ufoupdateslist.com/2004/mar/m19-002.shtml>). Retrieved 2010-03-27.
 - Colvin, T. "UFOs And Fairies/Legends/Supernatural – Pt. I" (<http://ufoupdateslist.com/2004/mar/m19-001.shtml>). Retrieved 2010-03-27.
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16. Bryan, 145fn
17. Schnabel 1994
18. Jacobs (2015), p. 31. [entire chapter 2 "Abductees, Aliens, and the Program" (pp. 15-46, especially Table 2, is helpful).
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External links

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-

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Alien_abduction&oldid=848027817"

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Grey alien

Grey aliens, also referred to as "**Alien Greys**", "**Roswell Greys**" and simply "**Greys**" or "**Grays**", are alleged extraterrestrial beings whose existence is discussed in ufological, paranormal, and New Age communities and who are named for their unique skin color. Forty-three percent of all reported alien encounters in the United States describe Grey aliens.^[1] Such claims vary in every respect, including the nature, origins (e.g. extraterrestrials, extradimensionals, time travelers, or machines), moral dispositions, intentions, and physical appearances of the encountered beings, though many of them nonetheless share some noticeable similarities. A composite description derived from this overlap would have Greys as small-bodied beings with smooth grey-colored skin, enlarged hairless heads and large black eyes.

The popularization of the idea of the Grey alien is commonly associated with the Barney and Betty Hill abduction claim, which purportedly took place in New Hampshire in 1961, although skeptics see precursors in science fiction and earlier paranormal claims; Grey aliens are also famed from earlier depictions of the 1947 Roswell UFO incident. Some sources in the UFO community describe the Grey aliens as artificially created beings used by other races as servants or even slaves to execute tasks such as abductions and others. Whatever the origin, the Grey alien has since emerged as an archetypal image of sentient non-human creatures and extraterrestrial life in general, as well as an iconic trope of popular culture in the age of space exploration.

Grey aliens



Generic illustration of a "grey"

Grouping	Alleged extraterrestrials
Similar creatures	Bug-eyed monster Reptilians Extraterrestrials in fiction
Other name(s)	Roswell Greys
Country	Predominantly United States

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Appearance

Greys are typically depicted as dark grey-skinned diminutive humanoid beings that possess reduced forms of, or completely lack, external human organs such as noses, ears or sex organs.^[2] Their bodies are usually depicted as being elongated, having a small chest, and lacking in muscular definition and visible skeletal structure. Their legs are shorter and jointed differently from what one would expect in a human. Their limbs are often depicted as proportionally different from a human's; their humerus and thighs are the same lengths as their forearms and shins.^[2]

Greys are depicted as having unusually large heads in proportion to their bodies. They are depicted as having no hair anywhere on the body, including the face, and no noticeable outer ears or noses, but only small openings or orifices for ears and nostrils. They are generally depicted as having very small mouths and very large opaque black eyes with no discernible iris or pupil. Reports of alleged encounters frequently state their height to be 2–4 feet (0.61–1.22 m) tall, although other varieties of Greys are sometimes portrayed as human-sized or taller.



Artist's depiction of a Grey

In popular culture

History

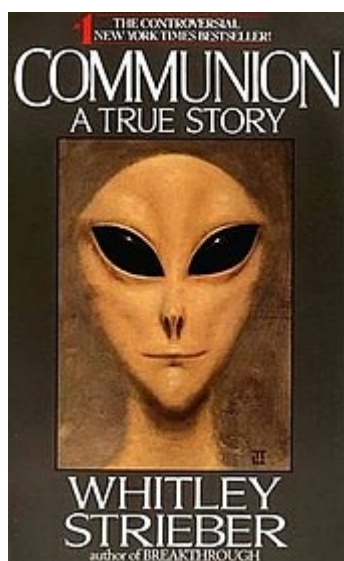
The precise origin of the Grey as the stereotypical extraterrestrial being is difficult to pinpoint. In the 1893 article "Man of the Year Million", the well-known science fiction author H.G. Wells envisioned the possibility of humanity transformed into a race of grey-skinned beings who were perhaps one meter tall, with big heads and large, oval-shaped pitch-black eyes. In his 1901 book *The First Men in the Moon*, Wells described Selenites (natives of the Moon) as having grey skin, big heads, and large black eyes. He also briefly describes aliens resembling Greys brought down to Earth as food for the Martians, who were the antagonist characters in his 1898 novel *The War of the Worlds*.

In 1933, the Swedish novelist Gustav Sandgren, using the pen name Gabriel Linde, published a science fiction novel called *Den okända faran* ("The Unknown Danger"), in which he describes a race of extraterrestrials: "...the creatures did not resemble any race of humans. They were short, shorter than the average Japanese, and their heads were big and bald, with strong, square foreheads, and very small noses and mouths, and weak chins. What was most extraordinary about them were the eyes—large, dark, gleaming, with a sharp gaze. They wore clothes made of soft grey fabric, and their limbs seemed to be similar to those of humans." The novel, aimed at young readers, included illustrations of the imagined aliens.

In 1965, newspaper reports of the Betty and Barney Hill abduction brought Greys to international attention. The alleged abductees, Betty and Barney Hill, claimed that in 1961, alien beings had abducted them and taken them to a flying saucer or saucer-shaped spaceship. (The term "Greys" did not come into usage until many years later, but the beings described by the Hills generally fit many characteristics of the Greys.) From a star chart reported by Betty Hill, Marjorie Fish, an elementary-school teacher and amateur astronomer, located the home planet of these beings in the Zeta Reticuli star system (allegedly the fourth planet of one of the stars of the Zeta Reticuli binary system). The Greys therefore became mistakenly known as *Zeta Reticulans*. However, the description of "Zetans", a similarly named alien race, differs completely from that of the "Greys", including in appearance, behaviour, flying craft design and their treatment of abductees.

The Greys appear as the (benevolent) aliens in the 1977 film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Grey alien-type beings are also depicted as musicians in *Star Wars* of the same year.

1980–1991



A Grey popularized from the cover of *Communion* by Whitley Strieber. The portrait was painted by Ted Seth Jacobs to Strieber's description and approval.

During the early 1980s, popular culture linked Greys to the alleged crash-landing of a flying saucer in Roswell, New Mexico in 1947. A number of publications contained statements from individuals who claimed to have seen the U.S. military handling a number of unusually proportioned, bald, child-sized beings. These individuals claimed that the beings had oversized heads and slanted eyes—but scant other facial features—during and after the incident.^[3]

In 1987, popular novelist Whitley Strieber published the book *Communion*, in which he describes a number of close encounters he alleges to have experienced with Greys and other extraterrestrial beings. The book became a *New York Times* bestseller, and New Line Cinema released a film adaption starring Christopher Walken in 1989.

In 1988 Christophe Dechavanne interviewed the French science-fiction writer and ufologist Jimmy Guieu during a weekly French TV Live Show which, at the time, was entitled "Ciel, mon mardi !". It was broadcast by TF1, one of the three

national TV channels in France. Besides mentioning Majestic 12, Jimmy Guieu described the existence of what he called "*the little greys*" which, later on, became better known in French under the following name: *les Petits-Gris*.^[4] In the early 1990s, the same ufologist Jimmy Guieu wrote two docu-dramas, using as a plot the Grey aliens / Majestic-12 conspiracy as described by John Lear and Milton William Cooper: the series "E.B.E." (for "Extraterrestrial Biological Entity"): *E.B.E.: Alerte rouge* (first part) (1990) and *E.B.E.: L'entité noire d'Andamooka* (second part) (1991).

1992–present day

During the 1990s, popular culture began to increasingly link Greys to a number of military-industrial complex and New World Order conspiracy theories.^[5] A well-known example of this was the FOX television series *The X-Files*, which first aired in 1993. It combined the quest to find proof of the existence of Grey-like extraterrestrials with a number of UFO conspiracy theory subplots, in order to form its primary story arc. Other notable examples include *Dark Skies*, first broadcast in 1996, which expanded upon the MJ-12 conspiracy, and *Stargate SG-1*, which in the 1998 episode "Thor's Chariot" introduced the Asgard, a race of benevolent Greys who visited ancient Earth masquerading as characters from Norse Mythology. Greys, referred to as "visitors", appear in two episodes of *South Park*, and Roger Smith, a regular character on the animated comedy series *American Dad!* since its debut in 2005, is a Grey-like alien. On *Babylon 5*, the Greys were referred to as the Vree, and depicted as being allies and trade partners of 23rd century Earth.

In 1995 filmmaker Ray Santilli claimed to have obtained 22 reels of 16 mm film that depicted the autopsy of a "real" Grey supposedly recovered from the site of the 1947 incident in Roswell, New Mexico.^{[6][7]} However, in 2006



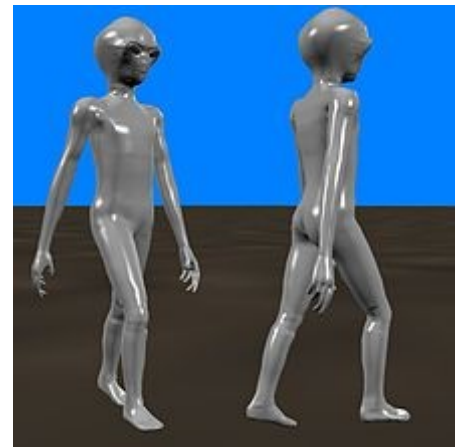
Star map of Zeta Reticuli, according to Betty Hill and Marjorie Fish

Santilli announced that the film was not original, but was instead a "reconstruction" created after the original film was found to have degraded. He maintained that a real Grey had been found and autopsied on camera in 1947, and that the footage released to the public contained a percentage of that original footage, but he was unable to say what that percentage was. This incident became the subject of the 2006 British comedy film *Alien Autopsy*, starring television presenters Ant & Dec.^{[8][9]}

During the 2000s, William J. Birnes published numerous accounts of encounters with little greys in *UFO Magazine*.

The 2011 film *Paul* tells the story of a Grey who attributes the Greys' frequent presence in science-fiction pop-culture to the US government deliberately inserting the stereotypical Grey alien image into mainstream media so that if humanity came into contact with Paul's species, there would be no immediate shock as to their appearance.

The anime *Dragon Ball Super* also tells the story of Jiren the Grey, with the difference being that he is of muscular build. Jiren has repeatedly been stated to be the strongest foe Goku has ever faced, and that not even a God of Destruction can defeat him. His ki alone while suppressed was more than enough to shake the infinitely large World of Void, leaving all the Gods of Destruction in shock.



A CGI generated rendering of two Greys.

Analysis

In close encounter claims and ufology

Greys are commonly included in alien abduction claims. Among reports of supposed alien encounters, Greys make up approximately 50 percent in Australia, 43 percent in the United States, 90 percent in Canada, 67 percent in Brazil, 20 percent in Continental Europe, and around 12 percent in the United Kingdom.^[1] These reports include two distinct groups of Greys that differ in height.^[2] Abductees say that they recognize the leader of their abductors by its "demeanor".^[2] Some ufologists and abduction researchers believe that taller Greys, with their reported increased authority and apparently more complex psychology, may be the only Grey type to be biologically alive and that the shorter form could be their artificially constructed robot or cyborg servants.^[2]

Some alien abduction reports have depicted variant skin colors such as blue-grey, green-grey, or purple-grey and sometimes not grey at all. The skin is typically described as being extremely smooth, almost as if made of an artificial material like rubber or plastic.^[2]

Abduction claims are often described as extremely traumatic, similar to an abduction by humans or even a sexual assault in the level of trauma and distress. (Research has shown that emotional impact of perceived abduction can be as great as or even greater than that of combat, sexual abuse, and other traumatic events.)^[10]

In his book *Abduction* (<https://www.amazon.com/Abduction-Dr-Paul-ebook/dp/B00703L8TW>), Dr. Paul recounts the events of David Hartman's abduction. Leading up to it Hartman, a computer programmer, claims he experienced strange phenomenon with his work tech including date and time changes, words typing by themselves, and whole sets of data moving from one place to another without human intervention. He also told of physical signs such as nausea, insomnia, and nightmares of inhuman faces coming out of the dark.

The eyes are often a focus of abduction claims. They are said to not move or focus in any observable way to the

naked eye. Claims often describe a Grey staring into the eyes of an abductee when conducting mental procedures.^[2] This staring is claimed to induce hallucinogenic states or directly provoke different emotions.^[11] Although abduction claimants often say that the Grey was only inches from their face during the staring mindscan procedure, they often subsequently claim to not feeling breath or seeing the Grey's chest move from breathing.^[2]

Psychocultural expression of intelligence

Neurologist Dr. Steven Novella argues that the Grey idea is a byproduct of the human imagination, with the Greys' most distinctive features representing everything that modern humans traditionally link with intelligence. "The aliens, however, do not just appear as humans, they appear like humans with those traits we psychologically associate with intelligence."^[12]

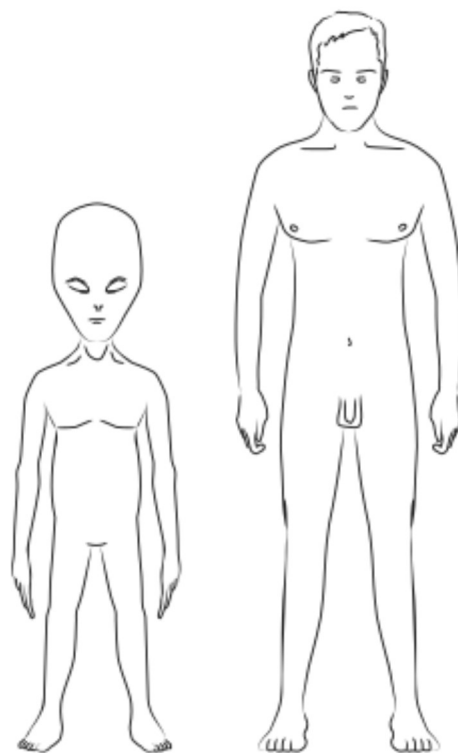
The "Mother Hypothesis"

In 2005, Frederick V. Malmstrom, writing in *Skeptical* magazine, vol. 11 issue 4, presents his hypothesis that Greys are actually residual memories of early childhood development. Malmstrom reconstructs the face of a Grey through transformation of a mother's face based on our best understanding of early childhood sensation and perception. Malmstrom's study offers a possible alternative to the existence of Greys, the intense instinctive response many people experience when presented an image of a Grey, and the ease of regression hypnosis and recovered-memory therapy in "recovering" memories of alien abduction experiences, along with their common themes. ^[13]

Evolutionary feasibility debate

According to English reproductive biologist Jack Cohen, the typical image of a Grey, given that it would have evolved from a world with different environmental and ecological conditions from Earth, is too physiologically similar to a human to be credible as a representation of an alien. Their physical structure has been sometimes viewed as supporting the panspermia hypothesis, although the level of "parallel evolution" (using the term in as it is used in science fiction, distinct from the use in biology and the related term "convergent evolution") required is statistically next to nil. The "parallel evolution" concept is utilized as a plot device by *Star Trek* writers Gene Roddenberry and Gene Coon and referred to as "Hodgkin's Law of Parallel Planet Development".

Some ufologists say such seemingly impossible coincidences show that extraterrestrial beings had some influence on the evolution of life on Earth in the distant past (the theory of ancient astronauts), specifically that extraterrestrials were directly involved in the evolution of primates, including humans. This was supposedly done by genetic engineering, cross-breeding, or a combination of both. This idea may have first gained widespread exposure with the 1968 publication of *Chariots of the Gods?* by Erich von Däniken and has since been the source of much controversy, inspiring numerous other books with various related theories.



A rendering of a grey (left) and a male human being (right) bearing similarities to each other.

Proponents of this theory of alien genetic-evolutionary intervention on Earth argue that if the Greys (or similar beings) were performing genetic manipulations with pre-human life forms on Earth that these aliens may have attempted to influence the evolution of life forms here in a direction consistent with their own genetic makeup, and similar to their own physiology and general physical structure, since genetically that is what they would presumably be most familiar with. Counter to this view, the anatomy, physiology, and genetic makeup of primates and humans are extremely similar to other animals on Earth, including those with divergent non-humanoid forms such as sea urchins, sea squirts, and acorn worms.

Since the history of life on Earth gives some idea of what is and is not feasible on other worlds, and there is no conclusive evidence of any past extraterrestrial genetic manipulation in our own evolution, some ufologists have offered alternative explanations to accommodate for the evolutionary improbability of Greys (or any other bipedal, humanoid extraterrestrial species) by explaining them as being native hominids to Earth either having left or living in hiding, as Mac Tonnies proposed in his book *The Cryptoterrestrials*, or from another dimension, as proposed by John A. Keel and J. Allen Hynek.

Conspiracy theories

Some conspiracy theorists believe that Greys represent part of a government-led disinformation or plausible deniability campaign, or that they are a product of government mind control experiments.^{[14][15]} Dr. Steven Greer, founder of the Disclosure Project, and head of CSETI, claims to have over 400 "government, military, and intelligence community witnesses" that have offered testimony to the existence of aliens and UFOs or efforts to cover up their existence and who have stated that they would be willing to defend their claims under oath.^[16]

See also

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <u>Alien autopsy</u> ■ <u>Alien abduction</u> ■ <u>Budd Hopkins</u> ■ <u>Extraterrestrial life</u> ■ <u>Extraterrestrials in fiction</u> ■ <u>John E. Mack</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <u>List of alleged extraterrestrial beings</u> ■ <u>Little green men</u> ■ <u>Men in Black</u> ■ <u>Nordic aliens</u> ■ <u>Reptilians</u> ■ <u>Starchild Skull</u> |
|---|---|

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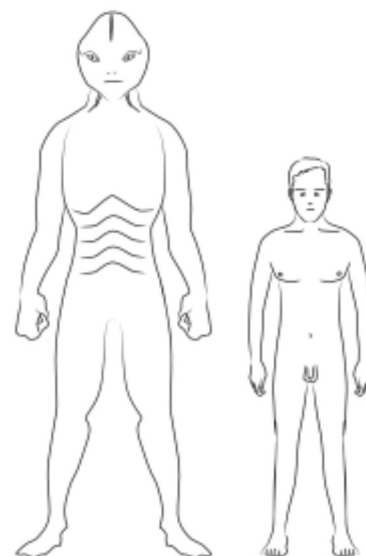
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Reptilians

Reptilians (also called **reptoids**,^[1] **lizard people**,^[2] **reptiloids**, **saurians**, **Draconians**)^{[3][4][5]} are purported reptilian humanoids that play a prominent role in fantasy, science fiction, ufology, and conspiracy theories.^{[6][7]} The idea of reptilians was popularised by David Icke, a conspiracy theorist who claims shape-shifting reptilian aliens control Earth by taking on human form and gaining political power to manipulate human societies. Icke has claimed on multiple occasions that many of the world leaders are, or are possessed by, so-called reptilians.



An artist's conception of a reptilian; an adult human male is shown for scale

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Origins

Michael Barkun, professor of political science at Syracuse University, posits that the idea of a reptilian conspiracy originated in the fiction of Conan the Barbarian creator Robert E. Howard. The first appearance of "serpent men" in literature was in Howard's story, "The Shadow Kingdom", published in *Weird Tales* in August 1929. This story drew on theosophical ideas of the "lost worlds" of Atlantis and Lemuria, particularly Helena Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, with its reference to "'dragon-men' who once had a mighty civilization on a Lemurian continent".^[8] Howard's "serpent men" were described as humanoid with human bodies but snake heads, able to imitate real humans at will, who lived in hiding in underground passages, using their shapechanging and mind control abilities to infiltrate humanity.^[9] Clark Ashton Smith used Howard's "serpent men" in his stories, as well as themes from H. P. Lovecraft, and he, Howard and Lovecraft together laid the basis for the Cthulhu Mythos.^[10] In the 1940s, a non-fiction writer, Maurice Doreal, wrote a pamphlet entitled "Mysteries of the Gobi" which described a "serpent race" that had "bodies like man but...heads...like a great snake" and an ability to take true human form.^[11] These creatures also appeared in Doreal's poem, "The Emerald Tablets", in which he claimed the titular tablets were written by "Thoth, an Atlantean Priest king". Barkun asserts that "in all likelihood", Doreal's ideas came from "The Shadow Kingdom", and that in turn, "The Emerald Tablets" formed the basis for David Icke's book, *Children of the Matrix*.^[12]

Alien abduction

Alien abduction narratives sometimes allege contact with reptilian creatures.^[13] One of the earliest reports was

that of Ashland, Nebraska police officer Herbert Schirmer (born 1945), who claims to have been taken aboard a UFO in 1967 by humanoid beings with a slightly reptilian appearance, who wore a "winged serpent" emblem on the left side of their chests.^[14] Skeptics consider his claims to be a hoax.^[15]

David Icke

According to British conspiracy theorist David Icke, tall, blood-drinking, shape-shifting reptilian humanoids from the Alpha Draconis star system, now hiding in underground bases, are the force behind a worldwide conspiracy against humanity.^[16] He contends that most of the world's ancient and modern leaders are related to these reptilians, including the Merovingian dynasty, the Rothschilds, the Bush family and the British Royal family.^[17] Icke's conspiracy theories now have supporters in up to 47 countries and he has given lectures to crowds of up to 6,000.^{[18][19]} American writer Vicki Santillano included it in her list of the 10 most popular conspiracy theories, describing it as the "wackiest theory" she had encountered.^[20]

A poll of Americans in 2013 by Public Policy Polling indicated that 4% of registered voters ($\pm 2.8\%$) believed in David Icke's ideas.^[21]

Politics

In the closely fought 2008 U.S. Senate election between comedian and commentator Al Franken and incumbent Senator Norm Coleman, one of the ballots challenged by Coleman included a vote for Franken with "Lizard People" written in the space provided for write-in candidates.^[22] Lucas Davenport, who later claimed to have written the gag ballot, said, "I don't know if you've heard the conspiracy theory about the Lizard Men; a friend of mine, we didn't like the candidates, so we were at first going to write in 'revolution', because we thought that was good and to the point. And then, we thought 'the Lizard People' would be even funnier."^[23]

"Evil reptilian kitten-eater from another planet" was a pejorative used to refer to then Ontario Liberal Party opposition leader Dalton McGuinty in a press release disseminated by the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario on September 12, 2003, during the provincial election campaign in Ontario, Canada.

In February 2011, on the *Opie and Anthony* radio show, the comedian Louis C.K. jokingly asked former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld a number of times if he and Dick Cheney were lizard people who enjoyed the taste of human flesh. Amused by Rumsfeld's refusal to directly answer the question, C.K. suggested it as a possible admission of guilt. He went on to further muse that perhaps those who are lizard people cannot lie about it; when asked if they are lizards, they either have to avoid answering the question or say yes.^[24]

On March 4, 2013, a video depicting a security agent with unusual features guarding a speech by U.S. President Barack Obama was spotlighted in a *Wired* report about shapeshifting reptilian humanoids, leading to a tongue-in-cheek response from chief National Security Council spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden that "any alleged program to guard the president with aliens or robots would likely have to be scaled back or eliminated in the sequester".^[25]

See also

- Ancient astronaut hypothesis
- Dino Riders
- Dinosauroid
- Gamehendge
- List of alleged UFO-related extraterrestrials
- List of conspiracy theories
- Lizard Man of Scape Ore Swamp
- Men in black
- Serpent Men
- Silurians
- Sleestak
- They Live
- V
- Worldwar

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External links

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Nordic aliens

In **UFOlogy**, **Nordic aliens** are humanoid extraterrestrials purported to come from the Pleiades who resemble Nordic-Scandinavians.^[1] Professed contactees describe them as typically male, six to seven feet tall (about two meters) with long blonde hair, blue eyes,^[2] and skin tones ranging from fair to tanned.^{[3][2][4]} UFOlogist George Adamski is credited with being among the first to claim contact with Nordic aliens in the mid 1950s, and scholars note that the mythology of extraterrestrial visitation from beings with features described as Aryan often include claims of telepathy, benevolence, and physical beauty.^{[5][6][1]}

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Cultural historian David J. Skal wrote that early stories of Nordic-type aliens may have been partially inspired by the 1951 film *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, in which an extraterrestrial arrives on Earth to warn humanity about the dangers of atomic weapons.^[6] Bates College professor Stephanie Kelley-Romano described alien abduction beliefs as "a living myth", and notes that, among believers, Nordic aliens "are often associated with spiritual growth and love and act as protectors for the experiencers."^[5]

In contactee and UFOlogy literature, Nordic aliens are often described as benevolent or even "magical" beings who want to observe and communicate with humans and are concerned about the Earth's environment or prospects for world peace. Believers also ascribe telepathic powers to Nordic aliens,^[4] and describe them as "paternal, watchful, smiling, affectionate, and youthful."^[2] Kelley-Romano observes that "white extraterrestrials are those that are most revered" among claimants, compared to other beings like the greys, and argues that claimants may use their stories about extraterrestrials "as a means of articulating racially based fears."^[5]

During the 1950s, many contactees, especially those in Europe, claimed encounters with beings fitting this description. Such claims became relatively less common in subsequent decades, as the grey alien supplanted the Nordic in most alleged accounts of extraterrestrial encounters.^[4]

Notable claimants

- George Adamski claimed he was contacted by Nordic aliens in his books *Flying Saucers Have Landed*^[7] and *Inside the Spaceships*.^[8]
- Howard Menger claimed contact with Nordic aliens in his books, such as *From Outer Space to You*.^{[9][10]}

In popular culture

- In the Conan O'Brien-produced TBS show *People of Earth*, a comedy about alien encounters, a Nordic is one of three main alien characters (along with reptilian and a grey).
- In the episode "Aliens Among Us" of the TV show *Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated*, a blonde Nordic alien was the disguise of Sheila O'Flaherty, a wanted thief. She and two others disguised themselves as aliens, including a Grey and a Reptilian.^[11]
- In the video-game *Perfect Dark*, the antagonistic Skedar aliens disguise themselves as Nordic aliens to trick humanity into submission.^[12]

See also

- Truman Bethurum
- Elizabeth Klarer
- Billy Meier
- Star people (New Age belief)

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UFO religion

A **UFO religion** is any religion in which the existence of extraterrestrial (ET) entities operating unidentified flying objects (UFOs) is an element of belief. Typically, adherents of such religions believe the ETs to be interested in the welfare of humanity which either already is, or eventually will become, part of a pre-existing ET civilization. Others may incorporate ETs into a more supernatural worldview in which the UFO occupants are more akin to angels than physical aliens; this distinction may be blurred within the overall subculture. These religions have their roots in the tropes of early science fiction (especially space opera) and weird fiction writings, in ufology, and in the subculture of UFO sightings and alien abduction stories.

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Summary

Some adherents believe that the arrival or rediscovery of alien civilizations, technologies and spirituality will enable humans to overcome current ecological, spiritual and social problems. Issues such as hatred, war, bigotry, poverty and so on are said to be resolvable through the use of superior alien technology and spiritual abilities. Such belief systems are also described as millenarian in their outlook.^{[1][2]}

UFO religions developed first in such countries as the United States, Canada, France, the United Kingdom and Japan as the concept presumes the cultural context of a society technologically advanced enough to conceive of ET as such and one in which religion of any kind is not discouraged or suppressed. The term "flying saucers" and the popular notion of the UFO originated in 1947. The 1950s saw the creation of UFO religions, with the advent of the

purported contactees.

Notable UFO religions

Aetherius Society

The Aetherius Society was founded in the United Kingdom in 1955. Its founder, George King, claimed to have been contacted telepathically by an alien intelligence called Aetherius, who represented an "Interplanetary Parliament." According to Aetherians, their society acts as a vehicle through which "Cosmic Transmissions of advanced metaphysical significance" can be disseminated to humanity. These "transmissions" were recorded on magnetic reel-to-reel tape by persons present during each "telepathic transmission" as George King sat in a state of "Samadhi" and the "transmission" was "delivered" via his own voicebox. In 1956 and 1957, and on occasion before a public audience, several of these "transmissions" forecast flying saucer activity in specific parts of the world on certain dates (You Are Responsible! Aetherius Society 1961). Shortly after these dates, newspapers, such as the Sunday Times and The Daily Telegraph, reported sightings which coincided with the dates and locations forecast in these "transmissions". As a spiritual teacher, George King taught certain yoga practices, spiritual healing, Eastern mantra and "dynamic prayer"—tools for spiritual self-advancement and service to the world—which the Aetherius Society is principally based upon.

Church of the SubGenius

Founded in 1979 with the publication of *SubGenius Pamphlet #1* by Ivan Stang and Philo Drummond, the Church of the SubGenius has been known as a "parody religion" due to its extensive use of comedy and parody. In spite of this, the organization claims over 10,000 followers worldwide who have paid \$30 to become "ordained SubGenius ministers", and it has been embraced by many skeptic and atheist groups. With the publication of *The Book of the SubGenius* in 1983, the Church of the SubGenius prophesied that its founder, J.R. "Bob" Dobbs, was in contact with an extraterrestrial race called the Xists ("X-ists"), and these Xists were scheduled to launch a worldwide invasion of Earth on July 5, 1998. (See also: X-Day (Church of the SubGenius)) The day of the scheduled invasion came and went without an appearance by the Xists, but church members remain unconvinced. The church now holds annual "X-Day" celebrations on July 5 of every year. The church also claims that its members are not entirely human, having descended from the Yeti.

Heaven's Gate

The Heaven's Gate group achieved notoriety in 1997 when founder Marshall Applewhite convinced 38 followers to commit mass suicide. Members reportedly believed themselves to be aliens, awaiting a spaceship that would arrive with Comet Hale-Bopp. The suicide was undertaken in the apparent belief that their souls would be transported onto the spaceship, which they thought was hiding behind the comet. They underwent elaborate preparations for their trip, including purchasing and wearing matching shoes and living in a darkened house to simulate the long journey they expected to have in outer space.^{[3][4]}

Nation of Islam

The Nation of Islam subscribes to the belief that UFOs are man-made machines that are piloted not by extraterrestrial beings, but by humans. It is believed that these machines will have a hand in the Day of Judgment. Its late leader Elijah Muhammed claimed that the biblical Book of Ezekiel describes a "Mother Plane" or great "Wheel". Elijah reported in his books that his mentor, Wallace Fard Muhammad, claimed that there was hidden

technology on the Earth which selected scientists all around the world are secretly aware of. Fard explained that he had had a huge "Mother Plane" or "Wheel" constructed on the island of Nippon (Japan) in 1929. The movement's current leader, Louis Farrakhan, describes the "Mother Plane" thus:

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad told us of a giant Motherplane that is made like the universe, spheres within spheres. White people call them unidentified flying objects (UFOs). Ezekiel, in the Old Testament, saw a wheel that looked like a cloud by day but a pillar of fire by night. The Hon. Elijah Muhammad said that that wheel was built on the island of Nippon, which is now called Japan, by some of the original scientists. It took 15 billion dollars in gold at that time to build it. It is made of the toughest steel. America does not yet know the composition of the steel used to make an instrument like it. It is a circular plane, and the Bible says that it never makes turns. Because of its circular nature it can stop and travel in all directions at speeds of thousands of miles per hour. He said there are 1,500 small wheels in this mother wheel which is a half mile by a half mile (800 by 800 m). This Mother Wheel is like a small human built planet. Each one of these small planes carry three bombs.^[5]

Raëlism

The International Raëlian Movement has been described as "the largest UFO religion in the world."^[6] Raëlians believe that scientifically advanced extraterrestrials, known as the Elohim, created life on Earth through genetic engineering, and that a combination of human cloning and "mind transfer" can ultimately provide eternal life. Past religious teachers, like Jesus, Buddha and Muhammad, are said to have been sent by these scientifically advanced extraterrestrials to teach humanity. The Elohim are said to be planning a future visit to complete their revelation and education of humanity.

Raëlian Priest Thomas said on this topic, "The difference between Raëlians and Heaven's Gate and Jim Jones etc., is that the others destructively believed in a God who would give them a better life after death, just like most believers in a monotheistic religion do today, and hence the risk for suicide chasing afterlife rewards ... as Raëlians we want the best right now in our life, who would want to die now in that scenario with all those pleasures to enjoy? Raëlians believe in enjoying life now, with happiness and laughter."

Scientology

Scientology has been discussed in the context of UFO religions in *UFO Religions* by Christopher Partridge,^[7] *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of UFO Religions* by James R. Lewis,^[8] and *UFO Religion: Inside Flying Saucer Cults and Culture* by Gregory Reece.^[9] Stories of extraterrestrial civilizations and interventions in past lives form a part of the belief system of Scientology. The most well-known story publicized and held up to ridicule by critics is that of Xenu, the ruler of the Galactic Confederacy who is said to have brought billions of frozen people to Earth 75 million years ago and placed them near a number of volcanoes, and dropped hydrogen bombs into them, thus killing the entire population in an effort to solve overpopulation. The spirits of these people were then captured by Xenu and mass implanted with numerous suggestions and then "packaged" into clusters of spirits.^[10]

From the early 1950s onwards, Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard, published a number of books, lectures, and other works describing what he termed "space opera".

Scientology teaches that all humans have experienced innumerable past lives, including lives in ancient advanced extraterrestrial societies, such as Helatrobus and the Marcabians. Traumatic memories from these past lives are said to be the cause of many present-day physical and mental ailments. Scientologists also believe that human

beings possess superhuman powers which cannot be restored until they have been fully rehabilitated as spiritual beings through the practice of “auditing”, using methods set out by Hubbard in his various works.^[11]

According to Hubbard, a thetan (the Scientology term for a soul) has a body. When that body dies the thetan goes to a “landing station” on the planet Venus, where they are re-implanted and are programmed to forget their previous lifetimes. The Venusians then “capsule” each thetan and send them back to Earth to be dumped into the Gulf of California; whereupon, each thetan searches for a new body to inhabit. To avoid these inconveniences, Hubbard advised Scientologists to simply refuse to go to Venus after their death.^{[12][13]}

Unarius Academy of Science

Founded by Ernest L. Norman and his wife, Ruth, in 1954, the Unarians are a group headquartered in El Cajon, California, who believe that, through the use of Four-dimensional space physics, they are able to communicate with supposed advanced intelligent beings that allegedly exist on “higher frequency” planes. Unarians believe in past lives and hold that the Solar System was once inhabited by ancient interplanetary civilizations.^{[14][15]}

Universal Industrial Church of the New World Comforter

The Universal Industrial Church of the New World Comforter is a UFO religion founded in 1967 by Allen Michael.

In 1947, Allen Noonan was a pictorial sign painter in Long Beach, California, who that year claimed to have an encounter with Galactic Space Beings. While painting a signboard he said he was beamed up into a Mothership. He then changed his name to Allen Michael. He claimed to have physically encountered a flying saucer in 1954 at Giant Rock in the Mojave Desert of California. During the Summer of Love, he began the One World Family Commune with a vegan restaurant on the northeast corner of Haight and Scott streets in San Francisco, California, called the *Here and Now*. 7 similar restaurants followed. His communal group lived in two large houses during the early 1970s in Berkeley, California. In 1969, the commune established a vegan restaurant in a much larger space on Telegraph Avenue and Haste Street in Berkeley and the name of the restaurant was changed to the *One World Family Natural Food Center*. They published a vegetarian cookbook called *Cosmic Cookery*. There was a large mural on the side of the restaurant painted by Allen Michael that had written above it the phrase *Farmers, Workers, Soldiers Unite — The People's Spiritual Reformation 1776–1976!* The farmer was holding a pitchfork, the worker was holding a hammer, and the soldier was holding a gun, and they had their arms around each other's shoulders. Above the three were three flying saucers coming in for a landing. In 1973, Allen Michael founded “The Universal Industrial Church of the New World Comforter” and published the first volume of his channeled revelations, *The Everlasting Gospel*. In 1975, the church headquarters and the vegetarian restaurant relocated to Stockton, California. Allen Noonan ran for president of the United States in the 1980 and 1984 elections on the *Utopian Synthesis Party* ticket.^{[16][17]}

Universe people

The Universe People or *Cosmic people of light powers* (Czech: *Vesmírní lidé sil světla*) is a Czech movement centered around Ivo A. Benda. Its belief system is based upon the existence of extraterrestrial civilizations communicating with Benda and other “contacters” since October 1997 telepathically and later by direct personal contact. According to Benda, those civilizations operate a fleet of spaceships led by Ashtar (sometimes written *Ashtar Sheran*) orbiting and closely watching the Earth, helping the good and waiting to transport the followers into another dimension. The Universe People teaching incorporates various elements from ufology (some foreign “contacters” are credited, though often also renounced after a time as misguided or deceptive), Christianity (Jesus was a “fine-vibrations” being) and conspiracy theories (forces of evil are supposed to plan compulsory chipping of the populace).

UFOs in other religions

Theosophy and Maitreya

The Theosophical guru Benjamin Creme claims that the Messiah figure he refers to as Maitreya, who, he teaches, will soon declare himself publicly, is in telepathic contact with the space brothers in their flying saucers.^[18] Creme subscribes to the view that Nordic aliens from Venus pilot flying saucers from a civilization on Venus hundreds of millions of years in advance of ours that exists on the etheric plane of Venus. These flying saucers are capable of stepping down the level of vibration of themselves and their craft to the slower level of vibration of the atoms of the physical plane (Creme accepts George Adamski's UFO sightings as valid).^[19] According to Creme, the Venusians have mother ships up to four miles long. It is also believed by the Theosophists in general as well as Creme in particular that the governing deity of Earth, Sanat Kumara (who is believed to live in a city called Shamballa located above the Gobi desert on the etheric plane of Earth), is a Nordic alien who originally came from Venus 18,500,000 years ago.^[20] The followers of Benjamin Creme believe there is regular flying saucer traffic between Venus and Shamballah and that crop circles are mostly caused by flying saucers.

Ascended Master Teachings

The Ascended Master Teachings are a group of religions based on Theosophy. In the traditional Ascended Master Teachings of Guy Ballard and Elizabeth Clare Prophet, no mention is made of UFOs or flying saucers. However, the Ascended Master Teachings teacher Joshua David Stone in his teachings began, beginning in 1993, to refer to Ashtar, believed by some UFO enthusiasts to be the commander of a flying saucer fleet called the "Ashtar Galactic Command" that operates near Earth (manned mostly by Venusians), as a Master along with the more traditional ascended masters. He continued to include "Ashtar" on his list of ascended masters that he mentioned he received dictations from when speaking at his yearly Wesak Festival Mount Shasta gatherings that began to be held in 1996. Stone also taught that the Master Jesus, under his "galactic" name Sananda, sometimes rides with "Commander Ashtar" in his flying saucer fleet.^{[21][22]}

Tempelhofgesellschaft

A neo-Nazi esoteric Nazi Gnostic sect headquartered in Vienna, Austria, called the Tempelhofgesellschaft, founded in the early 1990s, teaches what it calls a form of Marcionism. They distribute pamphlets claiming that the Aryan race originally came to Atlantis from the star Aldebaran (this information is supposedly based on "ancient Sumerian manuscripts"). They maintain that the Aryans from Aldebaran derive their power from the vril energy of the Black Sun. They teach that since the Aryan race is of extraterrestrial origin it has a divine mission to dominate all the other races. It is believed by adherents of this religion that an enormous space fleet is on its way to Earth from Aldebaran which, when it arrives, will join forces with the "Nazi Flying Saucers from Antarctica" to establish the Western Imperium.^[23]

New Message from God

The New Message from God claims that aliens are on Earth to take advantage of imminent, global environmental collapse: "Humanity is now facing competition from beyond the world, intervention from races beyond the world who seek to take advantage of a weak and divided humanity, who seek to benefit from the decline of human civilization."^{[24][25]}

Training centre for release of the Atma-energy

This sect was originally a splinter group of the Brahma Kumaris^[26] and is known for a police and media scare in which an alleged attempt to commit ritual suicide took place in Teide National Park in Tenerife in 1998. Apparently, the 32 members of the sect believed that they would be collected by a spacecraft and taken to an unspecified destination.^[27]

See also

- Doomsday cult
- List of new religious movements
- List of Ufologists
- List of UFO organizations
- List of UFO religions

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