

JEAN-CLAUDE RIBES

My name is Jean-Claude Ribes and I am an astronomer, working for the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique from 1963 to 1998. I contributed to the French COMETA report, a three year military study on UFOs and National Security released in 1999, and more recently to the book "Phenomenes aerspatiaux non identifies," under the direction of Yves Sillard, chairman of the Steering Committee of GEIPAN. He asked me to represent him and GEIPAN here today. General Denis Letty, chairman of the COMETA group, also asked me to represent him here, because he was unable to attend.

The COMETA report was written mainly by high ranking military people from the French High Studies Institute for National Defence. It analyzes the possible explanations for UFOs and their implications in terms of Defence, with the extraterrestrial hypothesis presented as the most logical one, even if not formally proven. Some recommendations are made, including that all managers of the Army, Police, Politics, and pilots be informed about UFOs; that detection systems be modified to take UFOs into account; and that the French government contact the United States and other allied countries to initiate cooperative action on the subject. So far, these recommendations have not been implemented.

However, last March, my country took a big step forward. Jacques Patenet, current director of GEIPAN, released the French UFO files to the public. They were posted on a website - more than 1,600 sightings spanning five decades. Some cases involved multiple sightings and physical evidence such as burn marks and radar trackings. Others documented UFOs with flight patterns or accelerations defying the laws of physics. M. Patenet told the press at the time that "We do not have any proof at all that extra-terrestrials are behind the unexplained phenomena. Nor do we have any proof at all that they aren't."

GEIPAN's Steering Committee plays an important role, with representatives from the Army, Police, Civil Aviation, Meteorology and the scientific community. This Committee insures the best conditions for gathering reports by instructing the agencies involved in investigations, and by protecting any witnesses who request anonymity for fear of ridicule.

My personal opinion is that UFOs should be taken seriously and studied without prejudice. There may be several possible explanations, such as rare atmospheric phenomena, but some cases strongly suggest actual flying machines with characteristics well beyond our terrestrial capacities. If these cases could be completely proven as such, then the extraterrestrial hypothesis would probably be the most likely explanation for these advanced craft. Admittedly, it is a fantastic possibility, but not an irrational one, given the data that we have.