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LANDMARK COURT SETTLEMENT REQUIRES NASA TO RELEASE DOCUMENTS ON MYSTERIOUS UFO CASE

New York, N.Y. -- On the heels of the news of NASA's attempt to withhold survey data on aviation safety problems, the Coalition for Freedom of Information (CFi) today announced the unprecedented settlement of a lawsuit against the space agency in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

As result of NASA's refusal to release its records concerning the 1965 Kecksburg, PA UFO incident and subsequent stonewalling, CFi filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit in December, 2003, as part of a broader FOIA campaign supported by SCI FI Channel.

Presiding U.S. District Judge Emmett G. Sulliivan approved a settlement that requires NASA to comb through hundreds of documents in specified locations and provide copies to Leslie Kean, investigative journalist with CFi and plaintiff in the lawsuit, under the watchful eye of the courts. NASA is required to declassify relevant documents, explain any redactions, and to pay Kean's legal fees as part of the settlement.

John Podesta, former Chief of Staff for President Clinton and President of the Center for American Progress, who has supported Kean's FOIA effort since 2002 commented, "The time to pull the curtain back on this incident is long overdue. Leslie Kean's victory is a triumph for open government and the spirit of inquiry."

Kean's attorney, Lee Helfrich, of the Washington firm Lobel, Novins & Lamont, had made the case that NASA was recalcitrant in its response to Kean's requests under the Freedom of Information Act. "It is unprecedented to have achieved success at forcing an agency to do this kind of extensive historical search under FOIA without Congressional intervention," Helfrich stated.

Kean has been seeking documents about the crash of an unknown object in Pennsylvania that occurred over forty years ago. Witnesses described seeing a fireball in the evening sky, a controlled landing and a systematic military recovery of a spacecraft-like object. As reported by local radio and newspapers, U.S. military personnel cordoned off the area, investigated the site, and left without ever providing a full report of the incident other than to dismiss it as a meteor.

"Finally, we hope to acquire the relevant documents about Kecksburg that are required by law," says Kean. "I look forward to working with NASA on the resolution of the terms set out by the court and to providing the public with the information it has been waiting for."

The US government has for years resisted releasing records on unidentified flying objects when requested under the FOIA. CFi does not make any assumptions about the origin of the Kecksburg object, but defines UFOs simply as airborne phenomena that have not been identified or explained.

Additional information on the Kecksburg incident and the NASA lawsuit, including the settlement document, can be found at: www.freedomofinfo.org.