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## Open UFO files to rest of us Earthlings

Leslie Kean - Pacifica Radio

Friday, December 13, 2002

*Atlanta-Journal Constitution*

As Steven Spielberg's TV series "Taken" raises public interest in government secrecy about unidentified flying objects, the Washington Post reports that Attorney General John Ashcroft has tightened the lid on the Freedom of Information Act. Ashcroft gave federal officers the green light to bend or perhaps break the information act if they want to withhold records, and he'll even defend them in court.

Two-thirds of the American people believe their government is withholding information about UFOs, and 60 percent of adults want the information declassified if it is not a national security risk, according to a September Roper Poll commissioned by the Sci Fi Channel.

So far, declassified records and scientific investigation clearly show that some UFOs are not science fiction. Unexplained objects have been well documented by trained observers such as pilots and military personnel. Some have landed and left ground traces in England, France and the United States.

"People have been digging through the files and investigating for years now. The files are quite convincing. The only thing that's lacking is the official stamp," says Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell.

As a result, the Sci Fi Channel is publicly calling for the declassification of government documents on UFO activity.

In October, network President Bonnie Hammer joined President Clinton's former chief of staff, John Podesta, to support a new information act initiative requested by me and the Washington law firm of Lobel, Novins and Lamont.

"I think it's time to open the books on questions that have remained in the dark, on the question of government investigations of UFOs," Podesta said at a Washington news conference. "We ought to do it because . . . the American people quite frankly can handle the truth, and we ought to do it because it's the law."

The request seeks documentation on the crash of an object of unknown origin in Kecksburg, Pa., in 1965. The U.S. government denies anything fell from the sky, despite the signed affidavits of firefighters, radio journalists, dozens of witnesses at the scene and newspaper reports to the contrary.

In 1969, the U.S. Air Force stated that "no UFO reported, investigated and evaluated by the Air Force has ever given any indication of threat to our national security" to justify closure of its investigation. The government still takes this position, despite routinely refusing to comply with information act requests about UFO cases on the basis of national security. In fact, some UFO incidents have obvious national security implications, although this would not appear to justify the withholding of information about them. According to North American Aerospace Defense Command logs, U.S. fighter jets attempted to pursue UFOs in 1975. Defense Department reports state that UFOs were also pursued after hovering over three supersensitive nuclear missile launch sites that same year.

And as recently as last July, two F-16s from Andrews Air Force Base were scrambled in the sky over Washington after radar detected an unknown aircraft. Military officials said they do not know what the jets were chasing, because whatever it was disappeared.

This month, the British Ministry of Defense released files on a famous multiple-witness case at Bentwaters Air Base in 1980. A memo by U.S. Deputy Base Commander Lt. Col. Charles Halt and a tape recording at the scene detail the landing of a glowing triangular craft that left three circular depressions and radiation 10 times higher than normal in a nearby forest.

Echoing the U.S. line, the British government also dismisses the phenomenon by claiming that the event was "of no defense significance." However, Britain's former Chief of the Defense Staff, Adm. Lord Hill-Norton, says that whether this represents the hallucination of men with the responsibility for guarding nuclear weapons or "the entry of a vehicle from outer space," it "cannot fail to be of defense interest."

There is no longer an acceptable justification for the withholding of reports on UFO incidents decades old, whether they are of defense interest or not. Nor is it acceptable for the attorney general unilaterally to refuse to enforce information act. The American people should not have to rely on science fiction for answers.

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