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## Feds asked to shed light on UFOs

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WASHINGTON -- The federal government is not adequately investigating unidentified flying objects and is hiding UFO-related documents, members of a new coalition hoping to bring a serious tone to the subject said today.

Spearheading the Coalition for Freedom of Information is the Sci-Fi Channel, which wants the government to unearth UFO documents so independent scientists can review the material. The cable network wants to further explore the line that separates science fiction from fact, Bonnie Hammer, its president, said.

"When credible scientists conclude that 5 to 10 percent of UFOs cannot be explained by natural or artificial causes, we think it is worth taking a much closer look at what is clearly a real and ubiquitous phenomena," she said.

As part of the coalition effort, veteran UFO journalist and author Leslie Kean is filing a Freedom of Information request to obtain documents related to a 1965 incident near Kecksburg, Pa., in which the Air Force retrieved an "object of unknown origin."

Conspiracy theorists, private investigators and journalists have long tried to obtain government documentation of UFOs. Often the target of their attention has been an Air Force base about 90 miles north of Las Vegas commonly known as Area 51. The government acknowledges a classified installation there but does not disclose base information based on presidential orders to protect national security.

Kean, whose stories have appeared in major daily newspapers nationwide, said she chose to chase information about Kecksburg over reported Nevada incidents because Area 51 documents are among the most secret in government.

Also appearing at the event was John Podesta, former chief of staff to President Bill Clinton, now a lobbyist and law professor. Podesta is lending his name to the effort because he is a longtime advocate of freedom of information, he said. Podesta, a fan of Fox television's "The X Files," said he was not a UFO conspiracy theorist and added, "I've certainly never 'been taken.' " But he said the government was keeping documents under wraps that should be made public.

"It's time to find out what the truth really is out there," Podesta said.

Clinton, like presidents before him, signed orders to keep Area 51 documents classified. Despite his call for openness, Podesta declined to discuss the base.

"I'm not really at liberty to talk about what I do know about this subject matter," he said.

Podesta earlier this year was a paid lobbyist who worked with Nevada lawmakers on a completely different issue -- Yucca Mountain. He helped lead their fight in Congress against the nuclear waste dump. The state's \$2.8 million anti-Yucca public relations campaign was worth the effort because it raised national awareness about the potential dangers of transporting highly radioactive nuclear waste cross country to Nevada, Podesta said after the press conference.

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