

SECRET OF 14 YEARS

UFO Debunking Laid To CIA by Scientist

By ROBERT WALTERS
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The government's failure to fully investigate reports of unidentified flying objects stems, in large measure, from a 1953 Central Intelligence Agency proposal for a systematic "debunking of flying saucers," an Arizona scientist said yesterday.

Dr. James E. McDonald said the government has refused to declassify a 14-year-old report which contains the CIA recommendation and also lists as the objective of the proposal "to reduce public interest in flying saucers."

McDonald told the American Society of Newspaper Editors that he was inadvertently allowed to examine the classified report by Air Force officials before the CIA decided to contin-

ue the document's secret classification.

McDonald, a senior physicist at the University of Arizona's Institute of Atmospheric Physics, said the disputed report was the result of a 1953 study of UFOs by a committee chaired by H. P. Robertson, theoretical physicist at the California Institute of Technology.

McDonald said the committee study was "a pivotal point in UFO history" because "instead of a recommendation that the problem be taken out of Air Force hands and turned over to some scientific agency for adequate study" the study group adopted the CIA proposal.

"I do not regard this as a dark and sinister action of a covert body trying to deceive the

citizenry of the nation. Rather, the reason behind this regrettable decision was entirely understandable when seen from a solely national security viewpoint," McDonald said.

"Viewed narrowly from security viewpoints, it made good sense to get this noise (UFO reports) suppressed. It has indeed been effectively suppressed in the ensuing 15 years," he added.

McDonald said that he knew of "no" evidence indicating that the CIA then maintained, or now maintains, any scientific scrutiny of the details of the UFO phenomena."

CIA officials told a reporter the 1953 action apparently stemmed from a belief at the

time that there was a possibility that flying saucers might have been developed by a hostile foreign power.

Security was necessary, they said, to give government intelligence officers an opportunity to check on that possibility without alarming the public, but all such theories have since been discounted.

McDonald also charged that the country has "been misled" about flying saucers and that the UFO problem "has been mishandled for many years" but he said that "scientific and official concern is beginning to change."

He said that Project Blue Book, the Air Force unit assigned to investigate UFO reports, "has been gradually downgraded to an extremely low-priority project."

The problem has been "superficially and incompetently handled by the Air Force," McDonald said, calling for a "full and fair congressional inquiry" and a probe by top-caliber scientists all over the world."

The recently granted \$300,000 Air Force contract for an 18-month study of UFOs by Dr. Edward U. Condon, former director of the National Bureau of Standards and now a physics professor at the University of Colorado, is a good start, McDonald said, "but they have not taken the problem seriously enough to muster the scientific strength to do justice to the problem."

Air Force Maj. Hector Quintanilla, in charge of Project Blue Book, was one of two men

appearing on the ASNE panel who disputed McDonald's views. He told the editors:

"To date the firm conclusions of Project Blue Book are:

"1. No unidentified flying object reported, investigated and evaluated by the Air Force has ever given any indication of threat to our national security.

"2. There has been no evidence submitted to or discovered by the Air Force that sightings characterized as unidentified represent technological developments or principles beyond the range of present-day scientific knowledge.

"3. There has been no evidence indicating that sightings categorized as unidentified are extra-terrestrial vehicles."

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