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HEADLINE: Committee Recommends Assessment of Parapsychology

BYLINE: By BARTON REPPERT, Associated Press Writer

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BODY:

The esoteric world of parapsychology may now merit a "serious assessment" by Congress to help decide whether further research is warranted, according to a study prepared for the House Science and Technology Committee.

Parapsychology, which involves heavily disputed phenomena such as "remote viewing" and influencing people at a distance through mental powers, is among more than 150 science and technology issues included in the survey, which was released Wednesday.

Other research horizons sketched out by the study range from global air pollution and weather modification to nationwide nutrition monitoring, the technology of robots, predicting earthquakes and advanced measures to help counter terrorism.

Rep. Don Fuqua, D-Fla., chairman of the panel, said committee staff members and outside specialists took more than two years to compile the 530-page survey.

The report's section on "the physics of consciousness" said recent experiments in remote viewing and other aspects of parapsychology "suggest that there exists an 'interconnectiveness' of the human mind with other minds and with matter."

Experiments on person-to-person phenomena have offered "encouraging results," it said, while studies on affecting physical objects at a distance "have yielded less compelling and more enigmatic results. The implication of these experiments is that the human mind may be able to obtain information independent of geography and time."

The congressional study cautioned that there is no certainty what may emerge from exploratory research now underway, and thus its potential importance "can only be speculated upon." It added, however, that "a general recognition of the degree of interconnectiveness of minds could have far-reaching social and political implications for this nation and the world."

For example, the report said, "in the area of national defense, there are obvious implications of one's ability to identify distant sites and affect

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sensitive instruments or other humans."

Deeper understanding of such phenomena also could bear upon other areas such as investigative work, education and "mind-initiated cures" in medicine.

The study observed that U.S. research in parapsychology has received relatively low financial backing "largely because the credibility and potential yield of such research is widely questioned, although less today than ever before."

"Given the potentially powerful and far-reaching implications of knowledge in this field, and given that the Soviet Union is widely acknowledged to be supporting such research at a far higher and more official level, Congress may wish to undertake a serious assessment of the research effort in this country," it said.

Other science and technology issues surveyed in the report included:

Weather modification through cloud seeding and other techniques. Federal funds for research in this area have remained nearly level during recent years and a cost-benefit study may be advisable to help map out a more long-term, comprehensive program.

Nutrition. "The United States lacks a uniform and integrated dietary, food, nutrition and health status data monitoring system. Such a system may be needed in order to know what nutrition problems currently exist and how these problems can best be resolved," the report said.

Earthquake prediction by animals. Although this field is considered "highly speculative," abnormal animal behavior is credited by the Chinese with predicting the major Haicheng earthquake in 1975. U.S. research funds in this field are only about \$100,000 a year and "Congress may wish to question whether sufficient priority is being given to animal studies and other alternative approaches to earthquake prediction."

Counter-terrorism technology. "The possible use of scientific and technological innovations to cope with the problem of terrorism has not been fully explored," the report said. Expanded research may be needed on electronic information systems, crisis management techniques, surveillance methods and "combative technology."

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