

## **A History of Government Management of UFO Perceptions through Film and Television**

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On 22 January 1958, the popular CBS television show *Armstrong Circle Theatre* presented an entire programme dedicated to the subject of unidentified flying objects entitled: “UFO: Enigma of the Skies.” Among the high-profile experts invited to speak on the show, retired US Navy Major Donald Keyhoe – director of the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) – was notable for his outspoken views on government secrecy surrounding the UFO phenomenon. Arguing against UFO reality on the programme were astronomer and vehement UFO sceptic Donald Menzel and Air Force representative Col. Spencer Whedon of the Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC). Their task should have been an easy one as the show’s content had been scripted in advance by CBS in conjunction with the US Air Force, and all guests – especially Keyhoe – had been instructed to read their pre-approved material from a teleprompter.

When it came time for Keyhoe to speak, in frustration he veered from his script and stated to the nation: “And now I’m going to reveal something that has never been disclosed before...”<sup>1</sup> The rest of his announcement went unheard by television viewers: unbeknownst to Keyhoe, his microphone had been cut by the station. Keyhoe continued:

For the last six months, we have been working with a congressional committee investigating official secrecy about UFOs. If all the evidence we have given this committee is made public in open

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hearings, it will absolutely prove that the UFOs are real machines under intelligent control.<sup>2</sup>

After the show, CBS was inundated with calls and letters from viewers demanding to know why Keyhoe's audio had been cut: "Call it what you like," wrote one viewer, "but it appeared to be a very shocking display of censorship; and certainly offensive to the intelligence of the American public..."<sup>3</sup> Nine days later, CBS admitted it had been subject to official censorship. In a letter to a disgruntled viewer dated 31 January, 1958, CBS director of editing, Herbert A. Carlborg, stated:

This program had been carefully cleared for security reasons. Therefore, it was the responsibility of this network to insure [sic] performance in accordance with pre-determined security standards. Any indication that there would be a deviation might lead to statements that neither this network nor the individuals on the program were authorized to release.<sup>4</sup>

As will be evidenced in this essay, the US government's historical efforts to censor UFO-related media products extend considerably further than the Keyhoe incident and have noticeably affected the content of numerous films and TV products over a six-decade time span. Before moving to examine some of these cases, however, it is necessary to ask: why should the US government wish to exert its influence over media representations of a subject as seemingly fanciful as UFOs? The answer to this question becomes clear with even a cursory glance at the government's early documentation on the subject, which reflects a sustained concern about UFOs (if not a consensus on their origins) at the highest levels of the US military.

## **Background**

The US government's interest in UFOs dates back to the summer of 1947 when America's national security apparatus was besieged by hundreds of reports from concerned citizens and military personnel of what appeared to be metallic disk-shaped objects traversing the nation's skies, sometimes in formation and often at impossible speeds. On 24 June private aviator and businessman Kenneth Arnold reported seeing

a chain of nine unusual objects over the Cascade Mountains in Washington State. Arnold described the objects' movement as being "like a saucer if you skip it across the water," inspiring the press to dub the mystery objects "flying saucers."<sup>5</sup> Many hundreds of saucer sightings were reported worldwide in the months to follow.

In 1948 the US Air Force produced its Top Secret and highly controversial "Estimate of the Situation," an official report concluding flying saucers to be interplanetary in origin.<sup>6</sup> Other factions within the Air Force, however, favoured the more palatable (though perhaps no less alarming) idea that the saucers were the product of technological innovations in the Soviet Union. Either way, secrecy regarding the issue was of paramount importance as the question of whether the objects were physically real had already been affirmatively answered in the minds of America's military leaders. In a once secret letter to Air Force Headquarters dated 23 September 1947, General Nathan Twining, head of Air Materiel Command (AMC), stated that flying saucers were "real and not visionary or fictitious," that they had "metallic or light reflecting surface[s]," were "circular or elliptical in shape, flat on bottom and domed on top," and were sometimes sighted in "well-kept formation flights varying from three to nine objects."<sup>7</sup> In a previously Top Secret Canadian government document dating from 1950, Wilbert Smith – head of the Canadian government's UFO research project, Magnet, noted with regard to UFOs that "The matter is the most highly classified subject in the United States government, rating higher even than the H-bomb."<sup>8</sup>

Today, numerous governments worldwide maintain dedicated and costly UFO study projects – collating and often investigating what collectively amount to thousands of UFO sighting reports made annually to authorities. In South America alone, the governments of Argentina,<sup>9</sup> Uruguay,<sup>10</sup> Peru,<sup>11</sup> Chile<sup>12</sup> and Brazil<sup>13</sup> either operate UFO investigations units or actively collect UFO sighting reports through their militaries. Other governments, including those of France,<sup>14</sup> New Zealand,<sup>15</sup> Denmark,<sup>16</sup> Canada<sup>17</sup> and Russia,<sup>18</sup> have in recent years released to the public thousands of pages of previously classified UFO files.

The UK government also is engaging with the public on the UFO issue through an ongoing process which has seen the release of thousands of previously classified UFO files through the National Archives.<sup>19</sup> According to the UK Ministry of Defense, UFOs (or UAPs – Unidentified Aerial Phenomena – as the MoD refers to them) "certainly exist," but are "still barely understood."<sup>20</sup> In a formerly secret 400-

page assessment of the UFO phenomenon released in 2006 under the Freedom of Information Act, the UK Defence Intelligence Staff acknowledged that:

The phenomena occur on a daily, world-wide basis... That UAP exist is indisputable. Credited with the ability to hover, land, take-off, accelerate to exceptional velocities and vanish, they can reportedly alter their direction of flight suddenly and clearly can exhibit aerodynamic characteristics well beyond those of any known aircraft or missile – either manned or unmanned.<sup>21</sup>

The report also notes that “attempts by other nations to intercept the unexplained objects, which can clearly change position faster than an aircraft, have reportedly already caused fatalities,” and warns that, with the increasing density of UAP reports in the UK air defence region, “a small possibility may exist... of a head-on encounter with a UAP.”<sup>22</sup>

There appears, then, to be a broad consensus among the governments cited above: UFOs are objectively real – albeit currently not fully understood by science – worthy, at best, of focused study and, at the very least, of sustained monitoring in the interests of aviation safety and national security. Standing outside of this consensus is the United States, which is conspicuous for its almost total silence on the UFO issue, which it has maintained since the closure in 1969 of the Air Force’s long-running UFO investigations project: Blue Book.<sup>23</sup> Despite shunning discussion of the phenomenon today, the US government’s historical concerns regarding UFOs clearly represent a significant passage – if not an entire chapter – in the history of its early Cold War machinations. Yet academic discourse surrounding the accepted historical meta-narrative of the US national security state rarely, if ever, accommodates serious discussion of UFOs. This is owed to the fact that, as observed by political scientists Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall: “Considerable *work* goes into ignoring UFOs, constituting them as objects only of ridicule and scorn... to that extent one may speak of a ‘UFO taboo,’ a prohibition in the authoritative public sphere on taking UFOs seriously.”<sup>24</sup>

In turn, details of the government’s involvement in UFO-themed entertainment products are meagre in the pages of cinema and TV history, with the only substantive work on the subject to date having been produced by historian

Lawrence Suid.<sup>25</sup> Although Suid's work is undeniably valuable (it is referenced extensively throughout this paper), it mischaracterises UFOs as a minor PR concern for the military – when in fact they were an issue of great sensitivity that initially raised serious questions regarding national security – and fails to acknowledge several cases of film and TV productions that the authorities actively sought to manipulate for political ends in line with government UFO policy.

This essay builds on Suid's work, filling in the gaps, bringing it up to date and elucidating further the government's historical motivations for exerting its influence over UFO-themed film and television productions. The government's historical engagement with such fare can most thoroughly be discussed with regard to the Department of Defense (DoD), which has worked extensively with Hollywood in exchange for the right to edit scripts for sixty years with the principal aim of encouraging recruitment and retention of personnel, as detailed by Suid in his extensive tome *Guts and Glory* (2002) and by journalist David Robb. However, in practice the Pentagon's remit is more wide-ranging, as it routinely promotes its own version of US history, as with its sanitisation of the military's public image through its removal of a key character in *Black Hawk Down* (2002) who in real life had been convicted of raping a twelve-year-old boy;<sup>26</sup> when it refused to cooperate on the feature film *Counter Measures* (1998) on the grounds that it did not want to remind the public of the Iran-Contra scandal;<sup>27</sup> or when it removed a joke about “losing Vietnam” in the James Bond film *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997).<sup>28</sup>

### **The UFO Problem: Managing Perceptions**

With regard to UFOs, the government's efforts at managing public perceptions are very well established, with the prime example relating to the so-called “Roswell Incident” of July 1947 when the Roswell Army Air Force (RAAF) hastily announced to the press its “capture” of a downed “flying saucer” on an isolated ranch in the deserts of New Mexico.<sup>29</sup> A few hours later, the RAAF changed its story to the effect that what had been recovered, in fact, was a common weather balloon.<sup>30</sup> The United States Air Force (USAF) was to change this story again in 1995 with the announcement that the “weather balloon” had been a Top Secret high-altitude spy balloon.<sup>31</sup> This story was then officially re-written in 1997 to account for a number of

apparently non-human bodies eyewitnesses claimed were recovered from the crash. The bodies, said the USAF, were human corpses, test dummies, or both.<sup>32</sup>

It is unsurprising, then, in light of its historical headaches relating to the UFO issue, that when filmmakers working on UFO-themed productions have sought cooperation from the Pentagon the response has been dismissive: deny cooperation or else request script changes that de-legitimise the study of the phenomenon. This process of official de-legitimation can be traced back to recommendations made in 1953 by the CIA-sponsored Robertson Panel, a group of leading scientists assembled by US government physicist Howard Percy Robertson for the task of reviewing the Air Force's UFO files. The Robertson Panel's main findings were that UFOs were not a direct threat to national security. Nevertheless, it suggested the Air Force begin a "debunking" effort employing the talents of psychiatrists, astronomers and celebrities with the goal of demystifying UFO reports.<sup>33</sup> The reasoning for this recommendation as officially stated lay in the belief that the Soviets might try to "mask" an actual invasion of the USA by causing a wave of false UFO reports to swamp the Pentagon and other military agencies.<sup>34</sup> Their formal recommendation was:

That the national security agencies take immediate steps to strip the Unidentified Flying Objects of the special status they have been given and the aura of mystery they have unfortunately acquired.<sup>35</sup>

The panel further stated that this should "be accomplished by mass media such as television [and] motion pictures..." and gave specific reference to Walt Disney.<sup>36</sup> It is not clear to what extent or how successfully these recommendations were implemented. However, even as late as 1966 the Robertson Panel wielded a demonstrable influence over media representations of UFOs in the CBS TV broadcast of *UFOs: Friend, Foe, or Fantasy?* (1966), an anti-UFO documentary narrated by Walter Cronkite. In a personal letter addressed to former Robertson Panel Secretary Frederick C. Durant, panel member Dr Thornton Page confides that he "helped organize the documentary around the Robertson Panel conclusions,"<sup>37</sup> even though this was thirteen years after the panel had disbanded and despite the fact that he was personally sympathetic to the existence of flying saucers.

The mentality of the CIA-Robertson Panel was present in other productions during the 1950s, not least in the aforementioned Keyhoe CBS/ USAF censorship

case discussed earlier. Also notable is the 1956 documentary, *Unidentified Flying Objects: The True Story of Flying Saucers*, which prompted the USAF to draw up contingency plans to counteract the anticipated fallout from the film upon its release. The director of the USAF's official UFO investigations unit, Project Blue Book, Captain George T. Gregory, was tasked with monitoring not only the film's production process, but its public and critical reception. Believing that the film would stir up a "storm of public controversy," the USAF set about preparing a special case file that would debunk every saucer sighting examined in the movie and even went so far as to have three of its Blue Book officers provide "technical assistance" to the filmmakers in an effort to control the content of the documentary.<sup>38</sup>

Another case in this vein relates to a UFO-themed episode of the *Steve Canyon* TV series (1958–1959) that raised the ire of the US Air Force. Backed by Chesterfield Cigarettes and produced at Universal Studios with the full cooperation of the USAF, the NBC show chronicled the live-action exploits of Milton Caniff's famous comic strip character. The episode to which the USAF took objection was entitled "Project UFO" and saw Colonel Steve Canyon investigate a spate of flying saucer sightings reported to a local Air Force base. According to aviation historian James H. Farmer, "This was an episode that the Air Force did not really want to be aired," because the UFO subject was "a hot potato."<sup>39</sup>

By the time the USAF had finished with the script, it was, according to Farmer, "pretty tame... compared to the earlier renditions."<sup>40</sup> In the episode as aired the UFO sightings are attributed to a combination of hoax-induced hysteria and – in support of the USAF's original Roswell cover story – misidentifications of weather balloons. Producer John Ellis of the Milton Caniff Estate (which owns *Steve Canyon*) explained: "Every single page got re-written, and re-written, and re-written..."<sup>41</sup> David Haft, the show's producer, was more to the point in his recollection of the USAF's reaction when he submitted the first script draft for official approval: "Oh, oh, oh, oh! No, no, no, no!"<sup>42</sup> Haft also noted that the USAF had difficulty in deciding what was acceptable for broadcast.<sup>43</sup>

In one of the earliest drafts of "Project UFO," Steve Canyon speaks to his Commanding Officer, Colonel Jamison, in defence of a civilian UFO witness: "Why call him a jerk?" asks Canyon, "Seems to me like he acted like a pretty solid, clearheaded citizen..."<sup>44</sup> This dialogue was removed. Elsewhere in the draft, Canyon appears to be enthusiastic about flying saucers. At one point, when a fresh UFO report

comes into the base from the local town, Canyon, “Jumps to [his] feet, rushes to [the] door,” and cries “This I gotta see!” before making “a hurried exit.”<sup>45</sup> In the final scene as originally written, Canyon is actually seen opening a book on flying saucers, “and sits there quietly reading...”<sup>46</sup> This scene failed to make it to the final draft, and, in the version as aired, Canyon’s excitement about UFOs is replaced with scepticism or plain indifference. An entire plot strand concerning the recovery and scientific analysis of what is initially suspected to be flying saucer debris (but which eventually turns out to be nothing of the sort) was removed. The draft included dialogue like: That *thing* [flying saucer] dropped a small metal ball enclosing an electrical apparatus so intricate, so ingenious, nobody yet has been able to figure out its purpose,” and, “the metal wouldn’t respond to any of the standard tests.”<sup>47</sup>

Despite the rewrites, the USAF preferred that the episode not be aired at all. “It got stuck on a shelf,” says Ellis in his DVD commentary, “it was finished... but they held on until near the end of the series to air it.”<sup>48</sup> Indeed, it was only through a last act of defiance on the part of the show’s producers toward the end of its run in 1959 that the episode was screened at all.<sup>49</sup>

Even prior to the Robertson Panel’s formation, government attitudes to UFO-themed film and TV productions in the 1950s were hostile, as Lawrence Suid observes:

The decision of whether the military should cooperate with a filmmaker depended not only on the way the military would be portrayed but also on whether the film differed from official Department of Defense positions on subjects like UFOs and alien life forms.<sup>50</sup>

However, concerns were raised by at least one film not even seeking military cooperation. *The Flying Saucer* (1950) was America’s very first UFO movie and its director, Mikel Conrad, claimed publicly whilst in production that he had managed to secure genuine footage of a real flying saucer for use in his movie. In September 1949, Conrad told the *Ohio Journal Herald*, “I have scenes of the saucer landing, taking off, flying and doing tricks.”<sup>51</sup> Shortly thereafter Conrad became the subject of a two-month official Air Force investigation. Documents released under the Freedom of Information Act reveal that an agent of the Air Force Office of Special

Investigations was dispatched not only to interrogate Conrad about his claims but also to attend the first private screening of his completed film. Unsurprisingly, Conrad's story was soon revealed as an elaborate marketing scam designed to promote what was, in reality, a tedious and uneventful movie.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, the Conrad case is significant for its demonstration of the high degree of seriousness with which the USAF regarded the issue of media representations of the burgeoning UFO phenomenon.

Also in 1950, the USAF refused cooperation with RKO pictures on *The Thing from Another World* (1951). In a Pentagon meeting with the film's producer, Edward Lasker, USAF officers explained that they had just spent half a million dollars proving that flying saucers did not exist and asked: "Why should we help you make a picture about one?"<sup>53</sup> They emphasised that "the Air Force will not participate in any activity that could be interpreted as a perpetuation of the flying saucer hoax."<sup>54</sup>

*The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), which depicted a flying saucer landing in Washington DC, was similarly turned down by the USAF, although the Pentagon ultimately provided limited assistance through the National Guard because, it said, in the event of an alien invasion, the Armed Services would indeed defend the nation.<sup>55</sup> In other words, although there were clear attempts to prevent the spread of the UFO mythology through the 1950s, there was at least some flexibility built into the Pentagon's criteria for working with UFO-related productions.

In 1969, the US closed Project Blue Book, its systematic study of UFOs, concluding that these sightings did not represent a threat to national security nor technological developments or principles beyond the range of modern scientific knowledge.<sup>56</sup> Yet the government-media model of non-cooperation and script manipulation remained generally true into the 1970s and beyond. In 1976, several arms of the government refused to cooperate on Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), his classic blockbuster imagining alien contact with humans.

Major Sidney Shaw in the National Guard Bureau in Washington wrote to Columbia Pictures:

We have reviewed the script and believe it would be inappropriate for the Air Force or National Guard Bureau to support the production. In 1969 the USAF completed a study which concluded there is no evidence concerning the existence of UFOs. We have not been

involved in UFOs since that study other than answering queries about the study. The proposed film leaves the distinct impression that UFOs, in fact, do exist. It also involves the government and military in a big cover up of the existence of UFOs. These two points are counter to Air Force and Department of Defense policy and make support to the production inappropriate.<sup>57</sup>

NASA also rejected the chance to cooperate with *Close Encounters*, even though the space agency had been known for being, “more flexible, sometimes to the breaking point” – in Suid’s words – over its relative willingness to cooperate with films that showed them in an unflattering light, including productions like *Marooned* (1969) and even the NASA conspiracy movie *Capricorn One* (1977).<sup>58</sup> Suid, however, in his analysis of this case, neglects to mention that not only did NASA refuse cooperation to Spielberg, but that the space agency sought actively to convince the director not to make the film at all. In a 1978 interview for the journal *Cinema Papers* Spielberg said:

I really found my faith [in UFO reality] when I heard that the government was opposed to the film. If NASA took the time to write me a 20 page letter, then I knew there must be something happening. I had wanted cooperation from them, but when they read the script they got very angry and felt that it was a film that would be dangerous. I think they mainly wrote the letter because *Jaws* convinced so many people around the world that there were sharks in toilets and bathtubs, not just in the oceans and rivers. They were afraid the same kind of epidemic would happen with UFOs.<sup>59</sup>

### **An Era of Greater Flexibility**

However, by the 1980s it was at least possible for a film to mention UFOs without the DoD trying to stifle it, starting with the children’s fantasy *Invaders from Mars* (1986), which was granted full cooperation from DoD. This cooperation, however, was based on the fact that the film did not draw directly from established UFO mythology; that the traditional “flying saucer” motif received minimal screen time; and because the

film presented positive images of the military. Major Fred Peck of the LA Public Affairs Office and his deputy, Chief Warrant Officer Chas Henry, helped director Tobe Hooper visualise how Marines might actually react in the event of the invasion. Peck commented that, “Marines have no qualms about killing Martians,” a line which made it into the film.<sup>60</sup> Peck and his Deputy also helped Hooper identify Marine reservists to constitute the cinematic leatherneck unit and recruited a retired public affairs officer, Captain Dale Dye, to prepare the extras.<sup>61</sup>

In a return to its old ways, in the mid-1990s, the Pentagon denied cooperation to *Independence Day* (1996) although depictions of UFOs were not its only concern over the picture. In fact, Tom McCollum of the Army Public Affairs Office in Los Angeles had a long list of changes, mostly quite technical.<sup>62</sup> Still, it is notable that among its list of recommended changes was the request that any government connection to Area 51 or to Roswell be eliminated from the film.<sup>63</sup> Maj. Nancy LaLuntas of the US Marines’ Los Angeles Public Affairs Office stated explicitly that the Pentagon would not support a film that perpetuates the Roswell “myth” and added that the “DoD cannot hide info from [the] President (i.e. aliens and [a space]ship in custody).”<sup>64</sup>

In contrast to its disapproval of *Independence Day*, the DoD had no qualms about cooperating with Steven Spielberg for his 2005 remake of *War of the Worlds*. As was the case with *Invaders from Mars*, though, Spielberg’s film did not draw in any readily identifiable way from modern UFO mythology as its narrative featured no government conspiracy, no UFO-related terminology (such as “Area 51”) or reference to historical UFO-related events (such as Roswell); nor, indeed, did it feature any UFOs in the conventional sense – only the ‘tripods’ of HG Wells’s source material. So, while *War of the Worlds* projected to audiences a vivid, *vérité* rendering of what a post-9/11 alien invasion in reality might look like, crucially for the Pentagon it also provided a recruitment-friendly representation of the professionalism and sheer fire power with which the US military would respond to such an invasion.<sup>65</sup>

In the interests of PR, the DoD also saw fit to lend extensive support to Spielberg’s 2007 production of *Transformers*,<sup>66</sup> despite the film’s plot drawing obliquely from UFO mythology. The USAF provided director Michael Bay with billions-of-dollars worth of state-of-the-art hardware for use in the film, including the F-117 Nighthawk and the F-22 Raptor fighter. The DoD saw *Transformers* as an ideal opportunity to bolster the image of the US military, which it achieved by exercising

its considerable contractual power throughout the film's production. As such, the onscreen military is portrayed forcefully as an unswervingly heroic and righteous institution, making the film "a great recruiting tool," according to Pentagon employee Chief Master Sgt. Mike Gasparetto.<sup>67</sup>

Like *War of the Worlds*, however, despite it dealing with the subject of aliens, *Transformers* was unlikely to have prompted a wave of flying saucer sightings as it contained no UFOs, per se, only giant transforming robots. The DoD's involvement in the film was also notably self-serving beyond the primary purpose of recruitment and can be seen as an attempt on the DoD's part to cleanse its image with respect to its troubled history with the UFO phenomenon. In one scene, for example, the Pentagon is absolved of complicity in what we learn has been a decades-long cover-up of alien visitations. Blame for the conspiracy is instead placed at the doorstep of the extra-constitutional "Sector 7," a "special access division of the government" which has been concealing its "Top Secret" alien research since 1934 within "Special Access Projects." Crucially, the cover-up has been conducted without the knowledge or consent of the Secretary of Defense (played by Jon Voigt), who is outraged when the truth is finally revealed to him: "And you didn't think the United States military might need to know that you're keeping a hostile alien robot frozen in the basement?"<sup>68</sup>

### **An Unknown Agenda**

Anomalous within the pattern thus far established of government hostilities toward UFO-mythologising in films and TV shows are perhaps two major cases in which various state agencies chose to cooperate on productions in which UFOs were depicted as being not only real, but distinctly extraterrestrial.

In 1979, Oscar-winning Disney animator Ward Kimball claimed that in the 1950s the USAF had approached Walt Disney himself to request cooperation on a documentary that would help acclimatise the public to extraterrestrial reality but that the project was abandoned when the USAF reneged on its offer to provide "real" UFO footage.<sup>69</sup> Indirect support for Kimball's claim was offered in 1997 by Philip Corso, a retired Lieutenant Colonel and former Chief of the Pentagon's Foreign Technology desk.<sup>70</sup> Corso claimed that the production of flying saucer movies was secretly encouraged by government-led UFO study groups in the 1950s to acclimatise the public to extraterrestrials whilst simultaneously manipulating perceptions of the

phenomenon; he referred to this alleged strategy as: “camouflage through limited disclosure.”<sup>71</sup> However, the testimonies of Kimball and Corso are just that: testimonies, and are not supported by documented and physical evidence. Still, other cases along these lines are rather more substantial. For the 1982 blockbuster *ET: The Extra-Terrestrial*, for example, it is known that producer Kathleen Kennedy and director Steven Spielberg brainstormed with NASA scientists on the likely official response to an alien’s arrival. This collaboration shaped sections of the movie, including the scene when NASA personnel enter a sealed-off suburban home in search of E.T. The producers also asked NASA what sort of planet E.T. might call home. They came up with a “little green planet” populated by “little mushroom farmers,” Kennedy says. E.T.’s biology reflected this scenario – the little alien “was closer to a plant than a biological human being,” Kennedy says.<sup>72</sup> Cooperation in this case was likely offered as a low-level courtesy due to the fact that the film’s representation of NASA was generally favourable – the professionalism and humanity of the space agency’s personnel shining through even in the face an extraterrestrial bio-hazard – and because its story was not so much concerned with the UFO phenomenon as with the fantastical friendship between a boy and an alien.

There was more comprehensive, high-level cooperation from the DoD for the production of one particularly unusual film, though – the documentary, *UFOs: Past, Present and Future* (1974), which considered the extra-terrestrial hypothesis in a much more serious light. The film’s director, Robert Emenegger, was given unprecedented access to DoD facilities, including the highly sensitive Holloman Air Force Base and the Pentagon itself. “The Secretary of the Air Force [Robert Seamans] gave the order to co-operate,” explained the director, who was granted time with high-ranking military officers apparently well-versed in UFO-related matters, among them Colonel William Coleman, a former spokesman for Project Blue Book, and Colonel George Weinbrenner, then head of Foreign Technology at Wright Patterson Air Force Base.<sup>73</sup> The film even included a detailed reconstruction of what Emenegger claims the USAF told him was a real extraterrestrial landing at Holloman Air Force Base in 1971, complete with artistic renderings of the alleged aliens. The USAF even provided Emenegger with a few seconds of footage showing what appeared to be an unusual, bright object descending slowly and vertically over the base. These frames, Emenegger claims, were taken from the “genuine” alien landing footage and officially authorised for use in his completed documentary, which, in line with a

recommendation by the USAF, presented the incident as “one that might happen in the future – or perhaps could have happened already.”<sup>74</sup> Emenegger claims that he was approached by the USAF to initiate this project, which would be in line with his scholarly interest in propaganda, his history as a Vice President at Grey Advertising, and his personal involvement in the Nixon Campaign to Re-Elect the President (CREEP).<sup>75</sup> The film also received support from the Army, the Navy and NASA, with the latter furnishing Emenegger’s production with previously unreleased photographs of what appeared to be UFOs taken in space by Gemini astronauts. It is hard to divine an explanation for the DoD’s actions in this case other than as some kind of public reaction test or an attempt by the Pentagon to be more open about its continued monitoring of the phenomenon.

The government also apparently provided assistance on Disney’s 2009 live action family film *Race to Witch Mountain*, despite the film’s plot drawing extensively from UFO mythology (with references both to Area 51 and Roswell) and despite its presentation of a sinister government cover-up. Working within the narrative constraints of the film’s previous incarnation, *Escape to Witch Mountain* (1975), director Andy Fickman – a self-confessed UFO enthusiast – took pride in infusing his remake with as many elements as possible drawn directly from UFO literature.

When Fickman first received the script from Disney it had been “more of a comedy,” but the director felt the material should be treated seriously and wanted to make use of events, debates and terminology stemming from the UFO research field: “I’m willing to do this movie,” Fickman told Disney, “but I want to ground it in as much reality as I possibly can.”<sup>76</sup>

Although the vast majority of the film’s UFOlogical content came from Fickman, at least some of it was the result of CIA input. In a highly unusual production arrangement Fickman claims he was closely assisted by an active employee of the CIA whose advice extended so far even as to designing the alien writing seen in the UFO during the film’s climactic scene. Fickman is unwilling to name this advisor, but claims he is an Air Force Colonel with a background in Technical Intelligence, that he had been “very active in Hollywood” and “had a lot of connections in the computer world and [experience in] satellite imagery.”<sup>77</sup>

Fickman said of his CIA advisor:

All of the on-camera alien language in terms of their spaceship and everything – that was all designed by him in the sense [of what] the mathematics of communication would be, so you know... there would be a similar mathematical equation that the government probably has if they were to ever come across an alien race. So a lot of the things we ended up using were things he was bringing to me... and the next thing you know, that's what I had on screen.<sup>78</sup>

The advisor also recommended that certain UFO-related content be removed from the script: “there were things we got rid of in the script that he was just trying to follow logic [on] from a protocol standpoint,” said Fickman, although he would not elaborate on the nature of the changes made.<sup>79</sup>

Fickman further claims that he was afforded a visit to NORAD's sensitive Cheyenne Mountain facility in 2008, where – accompanied by his CIA advisor – his team spent twelve hours taking photographs and talking with on-duty military officers, including the heads of NORAD. “We wanted our *Witch Mountain* to resemble what NORAD and Cheyenne Mountain look like inside,” he said, adding: “We took a thousand photos and then by the time they released us into the wilderness maybe we had three hundred that had been approved for us to somewhat copy [for production design purposes].”<sup>80</sup>

The CIA, for its part, claims to have had no involvement in *Race to Witch Mountain*. In an email to the author, Paula Weiss, Media Spokeswoman at the CIA Office of Public Affairs, said: “to the best of our collective knowledge in the media relations office, we did not provide any technical or other support to this production.”<sup>81</sup>

Fickman was puzzled by the CIA's denial. Questioned by the author on whether or not the CIA man could have been retired from the Agency and had been acting in a private capacity (as is the case with a number of ex-CIA operatives in Hollywood, including Robert Baer, Milton Beardon and Chase Brandon), the director replied: “there's no way we would have had what we had, had he not been an active CIA employee...”<sup>82</sup> Indeed, throughout the NORAD visit, Fickman claims he relied heavily on the influence wielded by his CIA man: “Nothing happened at NORAD without him flashing his card and making his calls.”<sup>83</sup>

Fickman believes it was due largely to the fact that his military and intelligence advisors were secured “through back door channels” that his production was granted such extraordinary access to the inner-workings of the national security apparatus, but he insists there was no hidden agenda behind the US government’s uncharacteristic generosity in this regard:

All of a sudden I was in places that I don’t know I would have been had I gone through normal channels. I don’t think there was anything abnormal about what they were doing, I just think it was [that] phone calls were being made and doors were sort of opening.<sup>84</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The US government has made concerted efforts over the years to manage through entertainment media popular perceptions of UFOs while attempting simultaneously to massage its own public image in relation to the phenomenon. If, though, as the government insists, UFOs are essentially non-existent, why the concern? In 1961, a NASA-commissioned report by the Brookings Institute, “Proposed Studies on the Implications of Peaceful Space Activities for Human Affairs,” warned that an official announcement confirming the existence of intelligent extraterrestrial beings could have disastrous consequences for human civilisation:

Anthropological files contain many examples of societies sure of their place in the universe, which have disintegrated when they had to associate with previously unfamiliar societies espousing different ideas and different life ways; others that survived such an experience usually did so by paying the price of changes in values and attitudes and behavior.<sup>85</sup>

The report also advised that the government ask: “How might such information, under what circumstances, be presented to or withheld from the public for what ends?”<sup>86</sup> However, although the Brookings report points to the concerns raised amongst powerful organisations about the potentially dangerous implications of UFOs and the need to control perceptions about the possibilities of alien life, it certainly does not

constitute evidence of a UFO cover-up. A US government cover-up, though, is precisely what was alleged in 1999 in a ninety-page report detailing the results of an independent study for the Institute of Higher Studies for National Defence – a French military think-tank. The white paper, now commonly referred to as The COMETA Report, was compiled by a group of thirteen retired top-tier generals, admirals and government scientists (including General Bernard Norlain, the former head of the French Tactical Air Force, and Andre Lebeau, the former head of CNES [the French equivalent of NASA]) and documented the existence of unidentified flying objects and their implications for national security.<sup>87</sup> Copies were received by President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. The report concluded that for the small percentage of UFO sightings which after exhaustive investigation and analysis could not be attributed to any known earthly technology or phenomena, the extraterrestrial hypothesis was valid. The report stated that some UFOs represent “completely unknown flying machines with exceptional performances that are guided by natural or artificial intelligence”<sup>88</sup> and noted that, although the extraterrestrial hypothesis “has not been categorically proven... strong presumptions exist in its favour.”<sup>89</sup> The report then goes on to consider in detail the likely consequences of open extraterrestrial contact for politics, science and religion.

In regard to the US government’s historical UFO research, the report states:

It is clear that the Pentagon has had, and probably still has, the greatest interest in concealing, as best it can, all of this research, which may, over time, cause the United States to hold a position of great supremacy over terrestrial adversaries, while giving it a considerable response capacity against a possible threat coming from space. Within this context, it is impossible for them to divulge the sources of this research and the goals pursued, because that could immediately point any possible rivals down the most beneficial avenues. Cover-ups and disinformation (both active as well as passive) still remain, under this hypothesis, an absolute necessity. Thus it would appear natural in the minds of U.S. military leaders, secrecy must be maintained as long as possible.<sup>90</sup>

US government secrecy surrounding UFOs throughout much of the Cold War is now a matter of public record; ongoing secrecy on the matter, however – much less an official cover-up – is difficult if not impossible to prove, although numerous persons of influence have over the years indicated that a cover-up of sorts has been and may still be in effect. Notable among these individuals are: former CIA director Roscoe Hillenkoetter;<sup>91</sup> former special assistant to deputy CIA director Richard Helms, Victor Marchetti;<sup>92</sup> Senator Barry Goldwater;<sup>93</sup> Gemini astronaut Col. Gordon Cooper;<sup>94</sup> billionaire financier Lawrence Rockefeller;<sup>95</sup> Apollo astronaut Edgar Mitchell;<sup>96</sup> former Deputy Prime Minister of Canada, Paul Hellyer;<sup>97</sup> and former Governor of Arizona, Fife Symington.<sup>98</sup> John Podesta – head of President Obama’s White House Transition team and former Chief of Staff to President Clinton – has also strongly hinted at a UFO cover-up. Speaking at the National Press Club in Washington DC in 2002, Podesta stated:

I think it’s time to open the books on questions that have remained in the dark on Government investigations of UFOs. It’s time to find out what the truth really is that’s out there. We ought to do it, really, because it’s right; 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.<sup>99</sup>

Since the flying saucer phenomenon entered the popular consciousness in 1947, the US military has maintained that UFOs are neither signs of aliens from outer space nor any other phenomena that points to a hidden government agenda. As such, numerous attempts by filmmakers utilising these themes on screen to secure DoD or broader government assistance have been rebutted on the grounds that their productions are in opposition to the official position that UFOs do not exist; furthermore, and on the same grounds, the Pentagon has actively discouraged – even censored – certain UFO-themed media products. Still, on occasion, and especially since the 1980s, the Pentagon has shown itself willing to cooperate on certain productions: namely those which downplay the sinister government links to UFO mythology and play up the abilities and willingness of the military to defend civilisation against attack. At the same time, the government has been cautious about associating itself with any film that promotes UFO reality in the context of the

extraterrestrial hypothesis, with two officially acknowledged exceptions – Spielberg’s *E.T. The Extraterrestrial* and the documentary *UFOs: Past, Present and Future*, and one unofficial exception, *Race to Witch Mountain*. Official involvement in *E.T.* can be accounted for on the grounds that it was both self-serving – in that the film depicted NASA scientists as being efficient and compassionate – and that it was not in contravention of its official policy on UFOs as the film’s plot did not plug directly into UFO mythology or depict a pre-existing, large-scale government cover-up. However, for reasons previously outlined, involvement on the part of various government agencies in the latter two productions is difficult to rationalise from an outside perspective.

None of this is to suggest that the government personnel who work on a day-to-day basis with Hollywood have any particular knowledge of or direct orders relating to UFO representations; indeed, it may be simply that the government’s Hollywood/Washington liaisons work to avoid associating the Pentagon with the UFO phenomenon for the very same reason that many people in other spheres of influence avoid the subject: namely, the aforementioned “UFO taboo.” Still, the pattern of the US government’s perception management relating to UFO-based entertainment is hitherto barely known and under-researched. Overall, this pattern indicates that for over six decades national security institutions, or at least powerful factions within them – in contrast to their publicly stated disinterest in UFOs – have closely observed and altered television and film depictions of the phenomenon, typically in line with broader government objectives in an attempt to prevent UFOs from gaining greater legitimacy or political currency.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Richard M. Dolan, *UFOs and the National Security State: Volume 1: Chronology of a Cover-up*, (Virginia: Hampton Roads, 2002), 209-10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Richard H. Hall, "Armstrong Circle Theatre: Air Force Censorship of TV Broadcast about UFOs Stirred Controversy in 1958," *Journal of UFO History*. Vol. 1, No. 6 (Jan/Feb 2005), 5, accessed on Jan., 30, 2011 at: <http://www.nicap.org/jufoh/JournalUFOHistoryVol1No6.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> For a selection of early press reports detailing Arnold's sighting, see "UFO Reports – 1947," *Project 1947*, accessed on 30 Jan. 2011 at: <http://www.project1947.com/fig/1947b.htm>. The first use of the term "flying saucer" features in the report titled: "Harassed Saucer-Sighter Would Like to Escape Fuss," *Boise, Idaho Statesman*, 27 Jun., 1947.

<sup>6</sup> The Estimate of the Situation was first mentioned in print in 1956 by former Project Blue Book Head Captain Edward Ruppelt. Its conclusions so alarmed Chief of Staff General Hoyt S. Vandenberg that he ordered all copies of the document incinerated; a few survived, however, one of which was examined by Ruppelt. See Edward Ruppelt, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* (Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2007), 45.

<sup>7</sup> Air Material Command, "Flying Discs," 23 Sept., 1947, Letter to Commander of the Army Air Forces, in T. Good, *Beyond Top Secret: The Worldwide UFO Security Threat* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1996): 313–315. Document also viewable at: [http://www.nicap.org/twining\\_letter\\_docs.htm](http://www.nicap.org/twining_letter_docs.htm)

<sup>8</sup> Smith obtained this information via the Canadian Embassy in Washington DC. See Wilbert Smith, "Memorandum to the Controller of Telecommunications," 21 Nov., 1950, Top Secret Confidential Department of Transport, Intradepartmental Correspondence, Ottawa, Ontario. Accessed on Jan., 30, 2011 at: [http://www.roswellproof.com/Smith\\_11\\_21\\_50.html](http://www.roswellproof.com/Smith_11_21_50.html)

<sup>9</sup> In 2010, the Argentine Air Force announced its creation of a commission to investigate UFOs. See "On the Hunt for UFOs," *TN*, 29 Dec., 2010, accessed on 30 Jan., 2011 at: <http://www.tn.com.ar/sociedad/128489/la-caza-de-ovnis>

<sup>10</sup> The Uruguayan Air Force has been active in UFO investigations for decades and began declassification of its UFO files in 2009. See Daniel Isgleas, "There are still 40 cases of unexplained UFO[sic]," *El Pais*, 7 Jun., 2009, accessed on 30 Jan., 2011 at:

<http://www.elpais.com.uy/090607/pnacio-421863/nacional/hay-aun-40-casos-de-ovnis-sin-explicacion/>

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<sup>11</sup> The Peruvian Air Force's Office for the Investigation of Anomalous Activity (known as OIFFA) was established in 2001. See Leslie Kean, *UFOs: Pilots Generals and Government officials go on the Record*, (New York: Harmony Books, 2010), 189.

<sup>12</sup> The Chilean government's Committee for the Study of Anomalous Aerial Phenomena (known as CEFAA) was established in 1997 under the jurisdiction of its civil aviation department and works closely with the aviation branch of the Chilean Army. *Ibid*, 190.

<sup>13</sup> In 2010 the Brazilian government ordered its Air Force to officially record all UFO sightings and to register them with the national aerospace defence command. All sighting reports are now stored in the national archives in Rio de Janiro and made available to researchers. See "Brazil Air Force to Record UFO Sightings, *BBC News, Latin America and Caribbean*, 12 Aug., 2010, accessed on 30 Jan., 2011 at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-10947856>

<sup>14</sup> Operating within the framework of the French national space agency (CNES) the Group for the Study of Information on Unidentified Aerospace Phenomena (known as GEIPAN) is generally recognised as the most scientific and efficiently organised official UFO investigations body in the world, having operated continuously for over thirty years. See: <http://www.cnes-geipan.fr/>

<sup>15</sup> In 2010, The New Zealand government declassified approximately two thousand pages of UFO sighting reports collected by its military between 1954 and 2009. See "New Zealand Releases UFO Government Files," *BBC News, Asia-Pacific*, 22 Dec., 2010, accessed on Jan 30., 2011 at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12057314>

<sup>16</sup> The Danish Tactical Air Command's historical UFO archives were made available to the public in 2009 and are accessible here: <http://forsvaret.dk/FRK/Nyt%20og%20Presse/Pages/UFO.aspx>

<sup>17</sup> Canada's UFO files have been available to the public through its national archives since 2007. See: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/ufo/index-e.html>

<sup>18</sup> In 2009, the Russian Navy declassified its records of encounters with UFOs and USOs (Unidentified Submerged Objects). See "Russian Navy UFO Records Say Aliens Love Oceans," *Russia Today*, 21 July, 2009, accessed on Jan 31., 2011 at: <http://rt.com/news/russian-navy-ufo-records-say-aliens-love-oceans/>

<sup>19</sup> MoD UFO files viewable at: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ufos/>

<sup>20</sup> Air Command, UK Ministry of Defence. *UAP in the UK Air Defence Region: Executive Summary (Full)*. *Mod.uk*. December 2000, 6-7, accessed on 31 Jan., 2010 at: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/FreedomOfInformation/PublicationScheme/SearchPublicationScheme/UapInTheUkAirDefenceRegionExecutiveSummary.htm>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>23</sup> Although the US government has released thousands of previously classified UFO files to the public, it has done so only under pressure applied through the FOIA, while the other governments cited recently have taken a more pro-active approach to their release of UFO files.

<sup>24</sup> Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall, "Sovereignty and the UFO," *Political Theory*, Vol. 36 (August 2008), 610, accessed on Jan., 31, 2011 at: <http://ptx.sagepub.com/content/36/4/607.full.pdf+html>

<sup>25</sup> See Lawrence Suid, "Lights! Camera! NASA!," *Space World*, Jun., 1987.

<sup>26</sup> David L. Robb, *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies* (New York: Prometheus, 2004), 91-93.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 42-45.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 29-30.

<sup>29</sup> "RAAF Captures Flying Saucer On Ranch in Roswell Region: No Details of Flying Disk are Revealed," *Roswell Daily Record*, 8 Jul., 1947, 1. For further details see: <http://www.wired.com/thisdayintech/2010/07/0708army-announces-roswell-new-mexico-ufo-sighting/>

<sup>30</sup> Associated Press, "Gen. Ramey Empties Roswell Saucer," *Roswell Daily Record*, 9 Jul., 1947, accessed on Jan., 31, 2011 at: <http://www.ufoevidence.org/documents/doc382.htm>

<sup>31</sup> Headquarters United States Air Force, "The Roswell Report: Fact Versus Fiction in the New Mexico Desert," US Government Printing Office, 1995, accessed on Jan., 31, 2011 at: <http://contrails.iit.edu/History/Roswell/Report/index.html>

<sup>32</sup> Headquarters United States Air Force, "The Roswell Report: Case Closed," US Government Printing Office, 1997, accessed on Jan., 31, 2011 at: <http://contrails.iit.edu/History/Roswell/roswell.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> United States, Central Intelligence Agency, *Report of Scientific Advisory Panel on Unidentified Flying Objects Convened by Office of Scientific Intelligence, CIA: January 14 – 18, 1953*, accessed on Jan., 31, 2011 at: <http://www.cufon.org/cufon/robert.htm>. See also: Dolan, *UFOs and the National Security State: Chronology of a Cover-up 1941-1973 Revised Edition*, 122-131.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>37</sup> Thornton Page, Letter to Frederick Durant. 8 Sept., 1966, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 398, Box 61, Folder No. 4, cited in: Terry Hansen, *The Missing Times: News Media Complicity in the UFO Cover-up* (Self Published, 2000), 254, 330.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Barrow, "U.F.O. Revisited," *Official UFO Magazine*, 1976, accessed on 31 Jan., 2011 at: <http://www.nicap.org/ufochop1.htm>. See also: Paul Meehan, *Saucer Movies: A UFOlogical History of the Cinema* (Maryland: Scarecrow, 1998), 66-67.

<sup>39</sup> James H. Farmer and John Ellis, DVD commentary, *The Complete Steve Canyon on TV Volume 1*, Episode 7: "Project UFO," NBC First Run Tuesday 19 May, 1959, DVD released through Milton Caniff Estate.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> David Haft, interview with John Ellis, 17 Aug., 2006. Ellis relayed Haft's account to the author in a telephone interview dated 01 Jun., 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Draft script supplied by John Ellis to the author, 27 May, 2009, courtesy of the Milton Caniff Estate.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> James H. Farmer and John Ellis, DVD commentary, *The Complete Steve Canyon on TV Volume 1*, Episode 7: "Project UFO," NBC First Run Tuesday 19 May, 1959, DVD released through Milton Caniff Estate.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Lawrence Suid, "Lights! Camera! NASA!," *Space World*, Jun., 1987, 16.

<sup>51</sup> Nick Redfern, "The Flying Saucer That Never Was," *Intermediate States: The Anomalist*, Vol. 13, (Oct. 2007), 51.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Lasker's comments likely refer to the Air Force's Project Grudge, an official UFO-debunking effort which ran throughout 1949. Grudge would reincarnate in 1952 as Project Blue Book. For details on the

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history and operating procedure of Project Grudge, see Edward Ruppelt, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, 58-66.

<sup>54</sup> Lawrence Suid, "Lights! Camera! NASA!," 16.

<sup>55</sup> Lawrence Suid, *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film, Revised and Expanded Edition* (University Press of Kentucky: 2002), 223.

<sup>56</sup> For information on Blue Book files stored at the US National Archives, see: <http://www.archives.gov/foia/ufos.html>

<sup>57</sup> Lawrence Suid, *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film, Revised Expanded Edition*, 494.

<sup>58</sup> Lawrence Suid, "Lights! Camera! NASA!," 20.

<sup>59</sup> Gail Heathwood, "Steven Spielberg," *Cinema Papers* (April/June 1978), 320. Requests to NASA, the Pentagon and Spielberg for a copy of the letter have proved unsuccessful.

<sup>60</sup> Lawrence Suid, *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film, Revised Expanded Edition*, 588.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 590.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 588-89.

<sup>65</sup> The film's primary military advisor, Pentagon film liaison Phil Strub, justified the DoD's involvement in the film thus: "We just wanted the case made that the Marines [depicted onscreen] understood that they were not going to prevail, but they were nobly sacrificing so the civilians... could escape." See John Herrman "How America's Proudest Technological Achievements Become Movie Props," *Smart planet*, 5 Oct., 2010, accessed on Jan., 30, 2011, at: <http://www.smartplanet.com/technology/blog/thinking-tech/how-americas-proudest-technological-achievements-become-movie-props/5418/>

<sup>66</sup> Larry A. Simmons, "'Transformers' put Airmen, Aircraft on Big Screen," *Af.mil*, 03 Jul., 2007, accessed on Jan., 30, 2011 at: <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123059424>

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> *Transformers* (Dir. Michael Bay, Paramount Pictures and Dreamworks Pictures, DVD, 2007).

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<sup>69</sup> Stanton Friedman, “Re: The UFO/Disney Connection,” email to researcher Grant Cameron, 17 Mar., 2000. Friedman was present when Kimball revealed the story and confirmed to Grant Cameron that: “It was at the Saturday Night program of the July, 1979, MUFON Symposium in San Francisco. Kimball spoke first, then Allen Hynek [former chief scientific consultant to Project Blue Book], and then me.” Incidentally, Kimball’s enduring fascination with UFOs was well known during his later years. His involvement in space-themed educational films for Disney and the political significance of these is also well established. See: [http://history.msfc.nasa.gov/vonbraun/disney\\_article.html](http://history.msfc.nasa.gov/vonbraun/disney_article.html)

<sup>70</sup> Philip, J. Corso and William, J. Birnes, *The Day After Roswell* (New York: Pocket Books, 1997), 84-85.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Dan Vergano, “Searching for Signs of ET life in the Universe,” *USA Today*, 19 Mar., 2002, accessed on Jan., 31, 2011 at: <http://www.usatoday.com/news/science/2002-03-19-et-signs.htm>

<sup>73</sup> Robert Emenegger, telephone interview with the author, 28 Oct., 2008.

<sup>74</sup> *UFOs: Past Present and Future* (Dir. Robert Emenegger, Sandler Institutional Films, 1974).

<sup>75</sup> As a Graduate student at UCLA in the late 1950s Emenegger wrote his thesis on “The Influence of Motion Pictures on Public Behavior.” Official documents pertaining to this, as well as Emenegger’s professional biography and details of his involvement in CREEP, are contained within the US National Archives. Copies of said documents are in possession of the author, courtesy of Grant Cameron.

<sup>76</sup> Andy Fickman, telephone interview with the author, 02 Sept., 2010

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Paula Weiss, email response to the author, 09 Aug., 2010. After having conducted the interview with Fickman the following month, the author sought further response from Weiss, who on 07 Sept., 2010, replied via email: “We have no knowledge of any CIA officer having assisted with this film... It’s very easy for outsiders, including Hollywood film people, to assume any US intelligence officer is CIA when in fact he could be from DIA, NSA, NGA, etc. Sorry I can’t resolve this for you based on the available information.”

<sup>82</sup> Andy Fickman, telephone interview with the author, 02 Sept., 2010

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Brookings Institution, *Proposed Studies on the Implications of Peaceful Space Activities for Human Affairs*, Washington: National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 1961, 216, accessed on Jan., 31, 2011 at: <http://www.nicap.org/papers/brookings.pdf>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 217.

<sup>87</sup> An English Translation of The COMETA Report is downloadable in full at: <http://www.ufoevidence.org/topics/cometa.htm>

<sup>88</sup> COMETA, *UFOs and Defense: What Should We Prepare For?* Institute of Higher Studies for National Defense, 1999, 34, accessed on Jan., 31, 2011 at: [http://www.ufoevidence.org/newsite/files/COMETA\\_part2.pdf](http://www.ufoevidence.org/newsite/files/COMETA_part2.pdf). The report originally appeared in a special issue of the magazine VSD in France, Jul., 1999.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 71

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 85

<sup>91</sup> “Behind the scenes, high-ranking Air Force officers are soberly concerned about the UFOs. But through official secrecy and ridicule, many citizens are led to believe the unknown flying objects are nonsense. To hide the facts, the Air Force has silenced its personnel.” Vice Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter as quoted in: “Air Forge [sic] Order On ‘Saucers’ Cited; Pamphlet by the Inspector General Called Objects a ‘Serious Business’,” *New York Times*, 27 Feb., 1960, accessed on Jan., 31, 2011 at: <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F50A12F9345D1A728DDDA10A94DA405B808AF1D3>. See also Leslie Kean, *UFOs: Generals, Pilots and Government Officials Go on the Record*, 143.

<sup>92</sup> “I do know that the CIA and the US government have been concerned over the UFO phenomenon for many years and that their attempts, both past and recent, to discount the significance of the phenomenon and to explain away the apparent lack of official interest in it have all the earmarks of a classic intelligence cover-up.” Victor Marchetti, “How the CIA Views the UFO Phenomenon,” *Second Look*, May, 1979, 2-5.

<sup>93</sup> In an official United States Senate letter dated 28 Mar., 1975, Goldwater responded to an enquiry regarding his publicly stated interest in UFOs: “About ten or twelve years ago I made an effort to find out what was in the building at Wright Patterson Air Force Base where the [UFO] information is stored that has been collected by the Air Force, and I was understandably denied this request. It is still classified above Top Secret.” In another Senate letter, dated 19 Oct., 1981, Goldwater further stated: “I have had one long string of denials from chief after chief, so I have given up... this thing [the UFO issue] has gotten so highly classified... it is just impossible to get anything on it.” See: Leslie Kean, *UFOs: Generals, Pilots and Government Officials go on the Record*, 243.

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<sup>94</sup> “For many years I have lived with a secret, in a secrecy imposed on all specialists and astronauts. I can now reveal that every day, in the USA, our radar instruments capture objects of form and composition unknown to us... I feel that we need to have a top-level, coordinated program to scientifically collect and analyze data from all over the Earth concerning any type of encounter, and to determine how best to interface with these visitors in a friendly fashion.” Gordon Cooper, Col. USAF (Ret.), letter to Ambassador Griffith, Mission of Grenada to the United Nations, New York, 09 Sept., 1978. See Gordon Cooper and Bruce Henderson, *Leap of Faith: An Astronaut’s Journey into the Unknown* (New York: Harpertorch, 2002), 219-225.

<sup>95</sup> In a 1995 letter addressed to Bill Clinton, as part of a sustained dialogue with the White House on the issue of UFO disclosure, Rockefeller requested that the President “personally and specifically direct a review of current government information policy concerning Extraterrestrial Intelligence (ETI), including Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs).” Rockefeller wrote: “It is widely believed that various agencies of the federal government have substantial information concerning the existence or non-existence of UFOs, and that it has been unnecessarily withheld from the public as classified. If the information were released, it would be received as evidence of a new spirit of partnership between government and its citizens.” Lawrence S., Rockefeller, “Lifting Secrecy on Information About Extraterrestrial Intelligence as part of the Current Classification Review, letter to President Clinton, 23 Aug., 1995. Document viewable at: <http://www.paradigmresearchgroup.org/Rockefeller%20Documents/RID-8-23-95.htm#2>

<sup>96</sup> “I happen to have been privileged enough to be in on the fact that we've been visited on this planet and the UFO phenomena is real... It's been well covered up by all our governments for the last 60 years or so, but slowly it's leaked out and some of us have been privileged to have been briefed on some of it... I've been in military and intelligence circles, who know that beneath the surface of what has been public knowledge, yes - we have been visited.” Edgar Mitchell as quoted in: “Apollo 14 astronaut claims aliens HAVE made contact - but it has been covered up for 60 years,” *The Daily Mail*, 24 Jul., 2008, accessed on 30 Jan., 2011 at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1037471/Apollo-14-astronaut-claims-aliens-HAVE-contact--covered-60-years.html>

<sup>97</sup> “The time has come to lift the veil of secrecy and let the truth emerge so that there can be a real and informed debate about one of the most important problems facing our planet today... but it is quite impossible to have that kind of informed debate about a problem that doesn't officially exist.” Paul Hellyer speaking at a symposium on UFO disclosure, 25 Sept., 2005, accessed on Jan., 30, 2011 and viewable at: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8964281348675417592#docid=-8731502304852399080>

<sup>98</sup> “There are many high-ranking military, aviation and government officials who share my concerns [about UFOs]. While on active duty, they have either witnessed a UFO incident or have conducted an official investigation into UFO cases relevant to aviation safety and national security... We want the government to stop putting out stories that perpetuate the myth that all UFOs can be explained away in

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down-to-earth conventional terms. Investigations need to be re-opened, documents need to be unsealed and the idea of an open dialogue can no longer be shunned... When it comes to [UFO] events... that are still completely unsolved, we deserve more openness in government, especially our own. See Fife Symington, "Symington: I Saw a UFO in the Arizona Sky," *CNN*, 09 Nov., 2007, accessed on Jan., 31 at: [http://articles.cnn.com/2007-11-09/tech/simington.ufocommentary\\_1\\_ufos-flares-aviation-safety?\\_s=PM:TECH](http://articles.cnn.com/2007-11-09/tech/simington.ufocommentary_1_ufos-flares-aviation-safety?_s=PM:TECH)

<sup>99</sup> The press conference took place on 22 Oct., 2002 and was organised by the coalition for Freedom of Information. Video of Podesta's statement available here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smwQau3HtKM>

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