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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

9 April 1958

Dear Mr. Davidson:

Your letter of 11 March 1958 concerning UFO's, addressed to the Central Intelligence Agency, has been referred to this office for reply.

As requested, I am inclosing a copy of the summary of the Report of the Scientific Panel on Unidentified Flying Objects, dated 17 January 1953. All the findings of the panel are contained in this summary. All personnel associated with this panel have given their permission for use of their name in connection with this report.

Therefore, free distribution to the public may be made at your discretion.

Sincerely,

Incl
a/s

LAWRENCE J. [illegible]
Major, USAF
Executive Officer
Public Information Division
Office of Information Services

Mr. Leon Davidson
64 Prospect Street
White Plains, New York

(This report was first released by the Air Force on April 9, 1958.)

REPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC PANEL
ON
UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

17 January 1953

1. The undersigned Panel of Scientific Consultants has met at the request of the Government to evaluate any possible threat to national security posed by Unidentified Flying Objects ("Flying Saucers"), and to make recommendation. The Panel has received the evidence as presented by cognizant Governmental agencies, primarily the United States Air Force, and has reviewed a selection of the best documented incidents.

2. As a result of its considerations, the Panel concludes:

That the evidence presented on Unidentified Flying Objects shows no indication that these phenomena constitute a direct physical threat to national security.

We firmly believe that there is no residuum of cases which indicates phenomena which are attributable to foreign artifacts capable of hostile acts, and that there is no evidence that the phenomena indicate a need for the revision of current scientific concepts.

3. In the light of this conclusion, the Panel recommends:

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.

We suggest that this aim may be achieved by an integrated program designed to reassure the public of the total lack of evidence of intelligent forces behind the phenomena.

/s/ Lloyd V. Berkner
Associated Universities, Inc.

/s/ H.P. Robertson, Chairman
California Institute of Technology

/s/ S.A. Goudsmit
Brookhaven National Laboratories

/s/ Luis W. Alvarez
University of California

/s/ Thornton Page
Johns Hopkins University

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A letter from a former Air Force officer, in response to request for comment on the Panel Report.

May 7, 1958

Mr. Leon Davidson
64 Prospect Street
White Plains, New York

Dear Mr. Davidson,

has forwarded your letter of April 28th and, although I have retired from the UFO controversy, I will attempt to shed some light on your problem.

First, the Air Force had nothing to do with the meeting of the scientific panel you refer to. It was completely set up and carried out by another government agency. Secondly, to my knowledge, no written report was ever made. Such a report was suggested during the meeting but rejected as a waste of time, effort and money. I didn't mean to infer in my book that a full written report was made.

I don't recall seeing the mimeographed piece of paper that you enclosed in your letter ; the only piece of paper I ever saw that was produced by the panel was an unclassified two-sheet statement which I believe was designed to be released to the press. It was referred to as "the white paper on UFO's." It was given to Air Force Intelligence by the agency sponsoring the meeting and at least one copy reached ATIC but it was never released to the press. It said essentially the same thing as the one you enclosed in your letter except it spelled out each point in a little more detail and it was the source of the quote on page 291 of my book.

In stating the above, I do not mean to infer that the piece of paper describing the panel meeting which you enclosed in your letter (and which I assume was released by the Air Force) is incorrect. It could well be in addition to the two-page document I referred to.

Now, in regard to the recommendations: several days after the panel meeting I went from Dayton to Washington and, along with Brigadier General Garland, then the Chief at ATIC, visited the agency that sponsored the panel meeting. We were told that the panel had recommended:

a. Project Blue Book be expanded.
   1. Specialists should be added to the staff.
   2. Instruments should be set up.
b. All secrecy should be stripped from the project.

I assume that these were the written recommendations of the panel because they were being read from a piece of paper and I had heard the panel virtually agree on them a few days before.

After I returned to ATIC, General Garland told me he had discussed the recommendations with Major General Samford, then the Director of Intelligence, and that I was to carry them out.

Recommendation "a" above could not be carried out because of a lack of money and the virtual impossibility of getting civil service positions at ATIC. Secondly, there were many people who doubted the value of expanding the project. As a "coast-best" move, the 4602nd AIS of Air Defense Command was tied into Project Blue Book and, in actuality, the project was quadrupled in size.

General Garland personally pushed the recommended instrumentation program but again money was the problem. I visited many people and companies to get information on tracking equipment. The instrumentation program was carried out but degenerated down to the famous grid-camera fiasco, which is well known, and an ADC effort in accelerating their program to put cameras on radar scopes. (The grid-camera program was in the mill at the time but had bogged down.)

In my book I stated that the reason for these recommendations was that the panel was not sure about the UFO reports; there might be something there. This was true; there might be something. But the panel's major reason for recommending that the UFO investigation program be expanded, I understood from the discussion, was to learn why so-called "experienced people" went into a tizzy whenever a UFO was reported. By this I mean pilots were fighting with balloons and planets, radar operators were tracking and plotting interference, etc.

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I do not care to discuss this aspect further but I believe you can realize the problem and why I didn't pursue the point in my book.

The panel seemed unanimous in agreeing that an expensive tracking range or system would pay for itself in the negative information it would gather. It would be worth the million or so dollars it would cost to operate the tracking net for a year or two to be able to say absolutely nothing had been detected. The UFO project had already cost that much and the panel could visualize more money being spent if a solution were not reached.

The recommendation to release everything, recommendation "b", was vetoed. The reason was that we had tried it in 1952 and some people took the information we put out in good faith.

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