

Early in 1953, the Air Force, in conjunction with the CIA, convened a group of scientists, later referred to as the Robertson Panel (after its chairman, Dr. H. P. Robertson), to review the UFO situation, examine selected sighting reports, and recommend future procedure for Project Blue Book. A recently declassified version of the Robertson Panel ("sanitized" by deleting the names of participating panel members) makes it clear that the primary recommendation by the panel was to downgrade the status of Project Blue Book and discourage public interest in the subject, claiming that UFO reports were interfering with national security by crowding Government intelligence channels. It is not surprising, then, to note that the final Status Report is dated 30 September 1953, allowing sufficient time to put into effect this change in policy and abandoning projects such as the Status Reports.

During the two-year period covered by these reports, the scope and effectiveness of the Air Force investigation varied widely from one extreme to the other. NICAP feels that the reports themselves not only add to the general history of the subject, but provide illumination on the many public statements about the subject that issued from the Air Force during that time.

FOREWORD

Serious students of the UFO problem will, I feel sure, find this compilation of the 1951-53 Grudge and Bluebook reports one of the most significant and certainly one of the most fascinating of the recent additions to the UFO literature. NICAP and its staff are to be congratulated for putting this material into a form readily available to large numbers of readers; and the Moss Congressional Subcommittee is to be praised for assisting NICAP in extricating the reports from the Air Force files where they have lain inaccessible for so many years.

When one studies the curious history of Air Force handling of the UFO problem, the twenty-four months from October, 1951 through September, 1953, emerge as a kind of "heroic period" of Air Force investigations. For increasing evidence points toward that period as the one interval during which UFOs were seriously and relatively vigorously investigated by the U. S. Air Force, the agency officially charged with UFO investigation responsibilities. Just before that period lay the "Dark Ages", as Ruppelt aptly labeled the 1949-51 era of Projects Sign and Grudge; and shortly after 1953 began a sort of new dark age when debunking and superficial investigations once again came to characterize Project Bluebook response to the UFO problem. As nearly as I can tell, the January, 1953, Robertson Panel Report marked the turning point with its regrettable decision to leave the UFO problem in the hands of a group not primarily concerned with scientific matters, and at the same time to have them shift to debunking policies to decrease public interest in the entire matter. It remains a very puzzling period, and an extremely important one in the history of UFO studies. It was the period during which Air Force UFO responsibilities were met primarily by one individual, Capt. Edward J. Ruppelt, an officer who might have brought the matter out into the full light of scientific scrutiny had his policies and viewpoints continued in force beyond 1953. They did not continue in force; after 1953 Bluebook went steadily downhill (viewed scientifically) and there evolved a steadily more adamant Air Force position that UFOs were only a nonsense problem. This would have caused no mischief if only the Air Force had made clear that it was really not doing anything resembling vigorous scientific investigation of UFOs from about 1954 to the present. Instead, Air Force press statements repeatedly misled the public and the scientific community by conveying a picture of Project Bluebook as a high-caliber scientific effort "drawing upon the finest scientific talents and facilities available to the Air Force." As the net effect, the entire UFO question has been swept almost entirely under the rug. Only the efforts of groups like NICAP have prevented complete concealment of the facts about UFOs.

But in the following pages, the reader can look back inside the closed doors of the Air Technical Intelligence Command (ATIC), and can get much more than a mere glimpse of what was actually transpiring back there in the heroic age. He will find in these reports the very real sense of 1952 puzzlement and concern that Keyhoe has written about and that Ruppelt conveyed in his 1956 book. He will read interim progress notes on many abortive efforts that Ruppelt and his superiors made over 15 years ago to try to secure improved UFO data. He will find surprisingly pointed remarks about the effects of ridicule in