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Civilians, Not Military Investigate UFOs

By Linda D. Kozaryn
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, April 8, 1997 – Mass suicide in San Diego has rekindled interest in UFOs, but people should not look to the Pentagon for answers. The military no longer serves as the nation's UFO-busters.

Thirty-nine Heaven's Gate cult members reportedly believed they were leaving their earthly bodies to reawaken aboard a UFO traveling in the Hale-Bopp comet's wake. In the past, investigating UFOs was up to the U.S. Air Force. From 1947 to 1969, Project Blue Book at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, investigated 12,618 sightings. All but 701 were explained. The remainder were categorized as "unidentified" because they involved sketchy reports that could not be nailed down, said Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon.

The public was often skeptical of Air Force explanations attributing UFO sightings to swamp gas, weather balloons or other natural phenomena. Pentagon officials repeatedly denied allegations the military had evidence of extraterrestrial visits. A 1950s report from Roswell, N.M., for example, claimed military officials had recovered alien corpses from a UFO crash site.

These allegations simply are not true, Bacon said at a recent Pentagon press briefing. "We cannot substantiate the existence of UFOs, and we are not harboring the remains of UFOs," he said. "I can't be more clear about it than that."

After investigating UFO reports for more than two decades, Air Force officials reached three conclusions: No UFO reported, investigated or evaluated was ever a threat to national security; none of the unidentified sightings represented technological developments or principles beyond the range of modern scientific knowledge; and there was no evidence unidentified sightings were extraterrestrial vehicles.

Finding no national security threat and no evidence of extraterrestrial visits, Air Force officials terminated Project Blue Book. "It just was not a good way to use taxpayers' money," Bacon said. UFO reports are now routed to private organizations, he said.

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