

CONTROVERSY

FOR EXPERTS & SCEPTICS,
THE MESSAGE IS THE SAME:

'THE UFO PHENOMENON JUST DOES NOT GO AWAY'

In spite of the world-wide reluctance of authorities — both government and scientific — to talk about UFO phenomena, some highly credible scientists are following their own investigations. Quentin Fogarty talks to three of them.

UFOs! They flit across our skies, land in our fields, abduct us, scare our cats and dogs and mutilate our cattle. They come as benevolent or malevolent travellers from other times and space. They are man-made machines, government secrets, the manipulators of minds, the shapers of consciousness.

To some, they are the ultimate expression of faith — the Lord and his Angelic hosts; to others — Satan and his demonic hordes.

They are the spawners of a host of magazines, books, films and documentaries. They are the stuff of dreams and nightmares.

To the more sceptical among us, UFOs are none of these. They are simply misperceptions, hallucinations, wishful thinking, hoaxes, superstition — the "new nonsense."

There is no denying that UFOs have an uncanny ability to provoke controversy

and cause bitter division. Nowhere is this more true than in the scientific community. Most scientists with an interest in the subject pursue their inquiries confidentially for fear of ridicule. Some are not quite so reticent. They believe that UFOs represent a truly puzzling phenomenon, or phenomena, worthy of serious study.

In the United States, three of the most prominent scientists involved in UFO research are Dr J. Allen Hynek, former consultant to the US Air Force study into UFOs, codenamed Project Blue Book, and now the director of the Centre for UFO Studies (CUFOS); Dr Bruce S. Maccabee, a physicist specialising in optics with the Naval Surface Weapons Centre in Maryland; and Dr Richard E. Haines, a NASA research scientist specialising in the problems of human perception.

On a recent trip to the United States, I interviewed the three men about aspects of the phenomenon. Here are highlights of

those interviews.

DR J. ALLEN HYNEK: When Hynek started as an astronomical adviser for Project Blue Book, he thought the phenomenon was a fad, and "like all fads and crazes I thought it would soon dry up and go away. Had anyone told me in 1948 that 33 years later we would not only still be talking about UFOs, but they they would still be a current topic of interest, I would have thought they were crazy."

Now, three decades later, this former UFO sceptic, runs the Center for UFO Studies in Evanston, Illinois, and is regarded by many as the world's leading ufologist. Hynek takes a certain amount of satisfaction from the fact that more and more people are taking an interest in the phenomenon. "The more intellectually aware are beginning to take notice," he told me. "The sorts of people who read *The Scientific American* and *The Scientist* and so forth, are becoming to realise that this



UFO phenomenon just does not go away. It is here.

As well as this general upsurge in interest, it has become increasingly evident recently that the American military and intelligence communities are also keeping tabs on the phenomenon, in spite of public pronouncements to the contrary.

Because of Hynek's former involvement with the military, I devoted the main part of the interview to this subject.

Fogarty: *There has been considerable publicity recently about the release of files on UFOs from the intelligence agencies in the United States. Have you learned anything new from these files?*

Hynek: Nothing that I had not pretty much guessed at before. Because of my work with Project Blue Book I knew of cases that came to my attention and never got into the official files. I know that there were cases that were handled separately so it came as no surprise to me when the

Freedom of Information investigation revealed that the CIA, for instance, had been looking into the matter for quite some time, and why not? That is the CIA's job. I cannot think of a government that would be so stupid as not to look into something like this. The Gallop Poll came to the conclusion that 57 per cent of the American population believed that UFOs were real. That is a large number and I cannot think of any government that would not take cognisance of that fact. If something intrigues that many people, and I were the head of the CIA, I would regard myself as derelict in my duty if I had not looked into it.

Fogarty: *But the CIA did deny their involvement for a long time. Why?*

Hynek: I think the intelligence community is a strange community. They almost regard the public as enemies. I'm reminded, though it's not quite apropos, of the comedian Groucho Marx when he

made the comment that military intelligence is a contradiction in terms. The intelligence community automatically classifies, automatically sits on something and, to exaggerate, they won't give you the time of day, unless you are cleared and so forth. Do it is the most natural reaction in the world for the FBI, or the CIA, or any intelligence community in Britain, and it's the same thing. It's an occupational disease.

Fogarty: *So it wasn't that they had anything to hide, it was not as though they had discovered the true nature of the phenomenon. It was more that they were locked into this syndrome, the public is the enemy, we cannot tell them anything?*

Hynek: Locked in is a good term for it. They are locked into that. For instance, when I first went with the Air Force as a consultant on this subject, I had to have top secret clearance. Why? It seems silly in a sense. However, at that time they

thought it might be the Russians, either the Russians or the Martians so to speak, and when they finally decided that it wasn't the Russians to the best of their knowledge, then at that time the whole thing should have been turned over to several universities. It became an academic, scientific problem. Unfortunately, the Air Force kept it as an intelligence question, which was bad. They should have played cleaner pool with the public and said here are some cases we cannot explain, here are cases we can, instead of the old cover-up deal of saying it was a balloon, it was Venus, it was such and such . . . many of the times it turned out to be absolutely not so.

Fogarty: *Do the files indicate a real concern on their (the intelligence communities) part about the phenomenon?*

Hynek: I would have to define, I suppose, what we mean by real concern. It wasn't an emergency concern in any sense, but a monitorial concern in the sense that they were watching developments.

Fogarty: *Is there any indication from the files they (the intelligence communities) have come up with any more answers than the civilian investigators?*

Hynek: No. Of course, the Freedom of Information Act doesn't mean you can get everything you want. They still have the gimmick, you might say, of national security. So if they had found something, let's say the propulsion system (of UFOs) for example, then that would obviously be a national security matter and they wouldn't say anything about it anyway, rather it wouldn't be released under the Freedom of Information Act. So I think the answer to that is, I just don't know. There certainly isn't anything in the papers so far that would constitute a scientific breakthrough.

Fogarty: *The people engaged in getting this information are continuing their legal battle, so maybe they will find out something?*

Hynek: Yes, given they're up against the funding problem . . . lawyers are notoriously expensive . . . so we shall see what happens on that. I wish them luck. So many of the interesting things in this field just happen to come up by accident, you just happen to be talking to someone. (Hynek then mentioned two cases involving the American military which were not included in the Project BlueBook files, although he considered that they should have been.)

Fogarty: *There seems to have been, on the part of UFOs, a sort of liking for war zones, military bases and intelligence centres . . . maybe that means something?*

Hynek: Well, it's one of the clues and what we have to do is add up all these

clues, first making sure that all the clues are right. In just about any subject, rumour, superstition and wishful thinking are rife but in this subject, particularly so. One of the main jobs is sifting, carefully... this is why we pay really very little attention to single-witness cases because, after all, they (the witnesses) might have hallucinated, they might have wanted so much to see a UFO that they transformed Venus into a UFO, or something of that



Dr J. Allen Hynek: sifting carefully.

sort. But when you have several witnesses, especially if they have some measure of independence, and you then collect those reports and compare them, of course you expect to find variations, human nature is human nature, observation differs, but you do then come to the conclusion that it was a real thing they observed and not some hallucination. If live people, who would certainly have different psychological breaking points, were all to report seeing the same thing simultaneously, and describe it identically in detail, in other words a five-part hallucination, then it seems that would be just as puzzling as the UFO phenomenon.

DR BRUCE S. MACCABEE: Navy physicist Maccabee is one of the most respected scientists currently engaged in UFO research in the United States. He is a consultant for various UFO groups and is also the chairman of the Fund for UFO

Research, a non-profit, scientific and educational organisation based in Washington DC. Maccabee's major undertaking to date has been an investigation into the New Zealand radar-visual-photographic sightings of December 31, 1978, in which I was a key witness. The interview with Maccabee covered many aspects of the UFO puzzle, starting with his thoughts about the nature of the phenomenon. He said something was definitely "going on," although it was sometimes difficult to differentiate between an objective reality and the existence of something in people's minds. Maybe, he suggested, it was a phenomenon so rare that it had hardly ever been recorded under reasonably controlled conditions.

Maccabee: I have considered the possibility that some reports suggest hardware of some sort. In other words, some people are reporting seeing definitely shaped, apparently metallic objects. It is kind of hard to imagine, in a multiple-witness report, that they (the witnesses) are all hallucinating something that looks like a piece of hardware. There are also reports of what we may call entities, or creatures, that are associated with these things (UFOs). If you collect all of these reports, it appears that somebody, from somewhere, is coming here. Other bizarre reports have stated that something just seemed to appear in a certain place. If it just appears, what does that mean? Is there a higher dimensionality, or something... somebody could be time travelling and breaking into our universe at a particular place? These are all highly speculative and, to some degree, unwarranted speculations because we do not have enough hard evidence to enable us to pin down what is going on. There is a whole collection of unidentified phenomena which is generally grouped under the classification UFOs, and some of these might be natural, some may be unnatural. It is difficult to split them apart and analyse one section.

Fogarty: *Some people would say that because of the number of UFO reports around the world over many years, there should be something more substantial to work on . . . like a crashed saucer, something as solid as that. Are you aware of any solid evidence that does exist?*

Maccabee: Take the first implication that there should be some evidence. If there are UFOs that are spacecraft flying around, should they crash? It is not inconceivable that somebody could come up with a technology that is so successful that the number of crashes is zero, or so small, that the chance of finding something is vanishingly small. A large portion of the earth is water, or land where hardly anyone goes. There could have been crashes here

and there that have just not been recorded. Sceptics have argued that our technology is not perfect, therefore "theirs" won't be perfect, therefore we should find crashed saucers, or something. Now if it is not hardware, but some sort of psychic projection as some people have argued, then there is not going to be any hard evidence. Personally, I do not know of any crashed saucers, but there have been reports, some of which have even come out of the US military and the military of other countries. I know of some reports that have even been generated by people employed in intelligence agencies.

The problem is to dig something out in the United States for example UFOs have been treated as a military problem right from the beginning. Originally it was thought that the Russians might have got a super jump ahead of us. Because the military treated it as an intelligence subject, they tended to keep their information secret. In a situation like that only a handful of people might have gone to a crashed saucer site. They would then have been sworn to secrecy with the threat of life imprisonment if they revealed anything. If that had happened, say back in the late 1940s or early 50s any information about a crashed saucer might have just plain disappeared.

A very interesting aspect of this subject though is that in the last couple of years there have been stories turning up, literally coming out of the woodwork, about people who have seen various bits of information that in the early 1950s, or late 40s, there may have been crashes of objects, that (the objects) were then transported to various US bases. It would appear that whatever the Air Force got hold of, and let's exclude crashed saucers for a moment, they just did not know what to do with it. So it was not really an intentional cover-up... they just did not know what to do with it. They wanted to get rid of it and they issued statements saying that they didn't have anything. You know, the Air Force ended its investigation in 1969 leaving 700 cases unexplained. If there were that many unexplained cases, what caused them? The Air Force took the attitude "we cannot explain it, let's go on to something else."

Fogarty: *What is the present attitude of the American defence establishments?*

Maccabee: If you were to write to the President, to NASA, or the Air Force, you would get directed to some public affairs office which would answer with an official form letter saying that the Air Force closed its investigation in 1969 and there was no evidence that UFOs were extra-terrestrial craft, or a superior technology, and that, as a result of the Condon Study of 1967-79 there was no point in continuing what was

Project Blue Book. However, you have to understand that if someone in the military sees something oddball in the sky, then they should report it to military intelligence. It might just happen to be a ballistic missile heading for Washington DC, or Melbourne, Australia. So, things like that do get reported. Certain UFO reports keep coming into the intelligence community. In fact there is a specific document: if you're in the US military,



Dr Maccabee: crashes unrecorded?

relating to how to make such reports and if you think it's super urgent you can say the secret code word, as it were, and get straight through to Washington.

DR RICHARD E. HAINES: The special forte of this NASA research scientist is the study of UFO encounters reported by air crews. He has about 3000 cases on his files, from many countries, and dating back to the 1920s. He has also taken a great interest in the incident involving a young Melbourne pilot, Frederick Valentich, who disappeared over Bass Strait on October 21, 1978, after he reported that his single-engined aircraft was being buzzed by a UFO. Haines says most of the sightings on his files would be classified as "nocturnal lights". However, there are a small number of cases where pilots reported seeing large objects, with physical details such as seams, near their aircraft.

Fogarty: *You are talking about apparently metallic craft?*

Haines: Apparently metallic craft, yes. The word silver, aluminium and chromium are words that are repeated very, very often.

Fogarty: *Are the pilots involved commercial or military, or both?*

Haines: My own files have military, commercial, private and test pilots... these are the four categories and, of course, I have files on each of the four. The majority are commercial. For my own research I purposely disregard single-pilot sightings and I will only analyse sightings with two or more observers onboard the plane, for reliability reasons. In a few isolated cases, like the Valentich disappearance, that is such an interesting case to me that I have looked into it. But with single pilots there has to be some supportive evidence to go along with it otherwise I will not waste my time. I think it's important to point out that the majority of commercial pilot sightings I have involve two to four witnesses simultaneously which certainly lends some credibility to the fact that something very strange is occurring. It doesn't explain any better what the phenomenon is, but it lends some believability to the basic event.

Fogarty: *Are these pilots prepared to be named. Have they given their names to you, have their names been in the news media?*

Haines: Some have, and of course some others fear ridicule and will not allow their names to be used.

Fogarty: *Has anyone been hurt in these aerial encounters between planes and these UFOs, disregarding the Valentich case for a moment. Is there any evidence, in the cases you have studied, that these objects mean any harm?*

Haines: That is a difficult question to answer. There are a number of Air Force cases from Project Blue Book, well from history now, a good number of years back, that raise some interesting questions along those lines. Because the data is so difficult to get hold of, I cannot comment on it directly. When one writes (to the officials) about more information what usually happens is we get a polite letter that says no further information exists. So from the military point of view, I guess my answer would have to be that I do not have any evidence of that nature. More recently there have been reported cases of aircraft damage in flight, by running into objects.

Fogarty: *What sort of damage are you talking about?*

Haines: Oh, dents for instance, or bent ailerons, or landing gear bent.

Fogarty: *I would assume that if two objects (a plane and UFO) were to collide at the speeds they would be travelling at,*

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then you would expect more than dents?

Haines: That's right.

Fogarty: What does that indicate to you?

Haines: I do not know yet. That is a good question. There has been a reported UFO case of a private pilot flying into Mexico City who claims that he was encountered, or accosted, by several discs and one of them came so close it actually dented a portion of the aircraft. That's a light aircraft, of course, and the material, the metal on the outside of the plane, is certainly not as strong as it would be on a commercial plane. The evidence of damage, or injury, is very sparse with pilots and who could say how many plane crashes, where there is a loss of life, might have some possible relationship to the UFO phenomenon. We just do not know. There is no way of knowing that.

Fogarty: This sort of denting would suggest that these objects, although they might look metallic, are not metallic?

Haines: That's right. I think we need to know far more about the effects of high energy density. For instance, can you get an implosion effect on a metal structure, as if it were a mechanical force or impact on the surface of the skin of an aircraft, which was not a mechanical impact at all but, let's say, a high energy density contact which causes the metal to deform? We just don't understand that much yet about metallurgy to draw conclusions about whether the object outside the plane was a metallic object. Perhaps it was just nothing but a plasma, a very high energy density plasma, we just don't know or (maybe it was) some other phenomenon for that matter.

Fogarty: Do you find this rather frustrating?

Haines: Well, yes and no. As a scientist I have to deal with some frustrations in regular scientific work. By the way, this research is entirely a hobby and I do it entirely on my own time and I do not make any pronouncements representing my employer.

Fogarty: That was what I was going to ask next. What is the official attitude of your employer (NASA). Do they discourage you, encourage you, or do they just not say anything?

Haines: They neither encourage or discourage me. They have not taken a public stand on it (the UFO phenomenon). I'm sure many people realise the agency is very busy with some important projects and this particular subject has not yet been accepted as one of the official projects that we are doing and I do not know of any NASA research on the subject. So, those of us who do research on UFOs, do it as private citizens.

Fogarty: What about your colleagues, how do they treat you?

Haines: I have found generally that they are very open-minded and accepting and, in fact, curious. They are perhaps as curious as I am, but because of their involvement with their own line of research they do not have the time to spend on it. On the other hand I have some very close friends inside the agency who are doing their own research on this subject. So I am certainly not alone. There are many of us.



Dr Richard E. Haines: "metallic craft".

Fogarty: I do not want to back you into a corner but what do you think UFOs are, or represent. Do you have any ideas you are prepared to state publicly?

Haines: No. As a matter of fact I do not have a public opinion on that issue can say this, however, that I don't have any direct evidence that UFOs represent visitors from outer space. I repeat, I don't have any evidence of that kind. Right now, I guess I'm tending in the direction of a natural phenomenon about which we know very little and science has not yet accepted. There are many examples of that in history which I'm sure your readers are aware of. Until other evidence comes along I guess I'm going to live with that one for a while and continue to do what I would consider (to be) open-minded research and look at all the evidence. As a scientist I've got to consider all the evidence and systematically check the hypotheses that are available and see how the data fits the hypotheses.

UFO EVIDENCE IN AUSTRALIA

An Australian Co-Ordination Section (ACOS) for the Centre For UFO Studies (CUFOS) was established in November 1974 in Gosford NSW, at the request of Professor J. Allen Hynek.

The ACOS for CUFOS functions were to act as a "Clearing House" to which all Australian UFO reports were sent by the major UFO organisations throughout Australia, as well as several independent investigators; to represent Australian organisations whenever necessary; to organise national conferences, and to disseminate information to all organisations within Australia who are part of this network, as well as overseas.

The Organisation's name was changed to the Australian Centre For UFO Studies (ACUFOS) in January 1980 to better reflect its role, as an Australian independent organisation within which the UFO phenomenon could be studied in this country.

Several hundred reports of unusual aerial objects are received by Australian organisations annually, and are thoroughly investigated from all scientific aspects. Approximately 85 to 90 per cent of the reports received can be explained in natural terms by the investigators of these organisations as being such common items as satellites, meteors, stars, planets, aircraft, weather balloons etc. It is the remaining 10 to 15 per cent, which appear to be unidentified, and are therefore referred to as "UFO reports". These reports, after investigation, are forwarded to ACUFOS in Gosford, where they form a central Australian library of reports as well as being coded into an Australian Computer File for research and study purposes. This UFO library, which presently contains over 600 reports, is open to all participating organisations and qualified individuals.

Scientific Consultants: The Scientific Board of the Australian Centre for UFO Studies consists of scientists who have offered their services to ACUFOS when required. This covers a wide range of sciences including Industrial Chemistry, Anatomy, Metallurgy, Photography, Soil Analysis, Psychology, etc.

These scientific consultants are called

upon whenever a specific case calls for information or assistance in their respective fields.

Here are some of the best cases which came to the centre's attention in 1980.

MALANDA-North Queensland.

On the morning of Tuesday February 10, a farmer inspected his field of pastoral grass when he found a large area of flattened crop with similar but smaller areas nearby. An area 60 metres long and varying in width from 5 metres to 9 metres was the main section involved with smaller patches flattened or only slightly blown over at each end of the larger more prominent area. The crop in the field is approximately 120cm tall from base to seed, and considered to be a good healthy crop. The crop in the damaged area lies down flat (i.e. roughly horizontal with the ground) at angles varying between 20 and 50 degrees.

Another smaller area with very slightly damaged crop is located approximately 200 metres south of the above trace, this is also an irregular shape. There are no signs of crushed vegetation within the damaged area, excepting the north end where the farmer drove his Landcruiser through for an inspection.

The witnesses did not consider the damage to have been caused naturally, as nothing like this had occurred before. They also mentioned that an unusually high consumption of water from the farm reservoir had occurred in the previous week which could not be accounted for. A check of nearby residents revealed that an elderly woman in the house close to the affected area had heard a "clunk" sound, sometime between 1 am and 2 am that morning, after which her dog had begun whimpering. Another woman (across the road) while in bed, had noticed a very bright glow in her window facing the road (and field) between 1 am and 2.30 that morning, however because of similar effects when cars pass along the road, this glow was ignored.

BAGDAD — Tasmania.

At approximately 9.30 pm on March 10, 1980, three witnesses were parked in a car off the main Midland Highway, east of Bagdad, with the car facing west, headlights out and radio on. They all saw a whitish, oval-to-elliptical moon-sized object brightly shining and seeming to spin or rotate. The object was moving rapidly



north from there being blocked by a nearby gum tree. The object did not appear as expected to the north of the tree but instead after 3-4 seconds it came back on its original track but this time going south at a very fast speed and within 3 seconds it had gone, the witnesses thought behind a hill on their southern side.

The object was estimated to be at a 45 degree elevation, however this sounds an over-estimation as the object was visible from the back seat of the car. The witness in the back seat thought there was a low "whirring" sound. A pale glow was noticed on the hill behind which the object was thought to have disappeared; this glow may or may not have any connection with the sighting. One of the witnesses was slightly disturbed by the event, so they left the area.



BABINDA — North Queensland.

At about 7.45 pm on the night of Saturday April 26, Mr S. and his brothers were at their mother's house, when one of the brothers looked out of the front window of the house and noticed an object to the west, hovering about 1 kilometre away over a gully. He called his brothers to look at it. The object was oval in shape with curved "wings" on each side. The object was described as bright silver in colour, the light of which dimmed and brightened as the object retreated and returned. Sometimes it seemed so bright that it was painful to look at.

Mr S. said one of his brothers also saw a red light at the top and bottom of the object; with a yellow light in the centre of the object. Over the next hour the object moved from a stationary position over the gully for an indeterminable distance and then back to a stationary position over the gully again. When over the gully, the object played a yellowish/white beam over the ground. The object would also spin on its horizontal axis before it retreated into the distance. The object was lost to view when it disappeared over the mountains to the west.

OGILVIE — Western Australia.

On Friday June 19, 1980, a farmer found four circular marks on the edge of a paddock. The marks were 1.3 metres in diameter, 10 centimetres deep and evenly spaced 8.7 metres apart. They appeared in a soft barley paddock, and according to Mr P. whatever made them would have to have been extremely heavy, as he drives a 14 ton truck loaded with seed and super and it

does not make marks anything like these. Another farmer on a nearby property said he saw a light rising from the ground where the marks were found two weeks earlier. He did not report the sighting as he thought his eyes might have been playing tricks on him. At the time he was out in his own fields ploughing. It was about 1 am and he was half asleep, but is certain about seeing the light.

Although the paddock is fairly soft, the marks were rock-hard, and seemed to have been compacted by a very heavy weight.

Some interesting features are:

1. All the pads are the same depth (10 centimetres).
2. All the pads are 1.3 metres in diameter-
3. There are no other marks around the pads.
4. The shape of the area is symmetrical.

MOUNTAIN CREEK — Tasmania.

Two men were in a Landcruiser and had travelled up Mountain Creek, north of Lake Sorell to do some shooting. The night was breezy north westerly with some cloud but otherwise fine. One of the men got out of the vehicle on a button grass plain to shoot at a kangaroo and their beagle dog went off to find the roo. Meanwhile, the driver noticed (with his window wound down) a light at ground level to the north-east, partially obscured by some tea tree 300 metres away.

The light was quite clear through the trunks of the tea tree, and he thought it must be some other shooters. A closer look about a minute later showed that there were in fact three lights, white at each side and flickering red in the centre. There was a green-yellowish phosphorous type of



glow below which illuminated a long body above and was estimated to be about 8 metres long and 2 metres high. There was a deep whirring noise like an electric motor.

They felt frightened as they waited for the dog to return. Five shots were fired at the object, at this it moved slowly away towards the north-east just above ground level, still rotating and whirring. It glided up over low ridges on the marsh, then suddenly appeared at great speed as it shot up vertically into the night sky, and within one second it had dwindled to a dot and was gone. Some seconds after the object had gone, the dog jumped in through the window, its hair on end and looking distressed.